



Inheritance

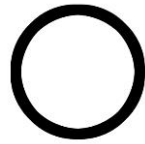
Wayne Douglas Weedon

Minnegaffe Publishing House

Inheritance

A Novel

Wayne Douglas Weedon



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Minnegaffe Publishing House

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Front Cover: Virgin and Child with Four Angels by Gerard David

Back Cover: The Last Communion of Saint Mary of Egypt by Marcantonio Franceschini

Yet, as we know, no evil has been more violent or disruptive or cruel than religion.

- Tom Harpur, *Water into Wine*

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SYNOPSIS

Nothing is as it seems. Like a coin, there is always a flip side. Everything exists as a dichotomy. Light and dark, good and evil, hot and cold, near and far, knowledge and ignorance, love and hate, lust and serenity, vacuum and surfeit. One side cannot live without the other. Our protagonist, Francis Humphrey, learns comfort and contentment can only be found in an equilibrium between the two parts of a dichotomy. This is the balance point, the edge of the coin. In truth things are not a dichotomy, but a trilogy, two equal but opposite sides, and the balance point, the middle ground, which may be demonstrated by a pendulum at rest, a pendulum at ease and not in dis-ease.

An extremely rich person may be no more content than an impoverished person, an overly knowledgeable person may be just as restless and miserable as someone living in ignorance. An epiphany, which had been fermenting in Francis' subconscious, suddenly pops into his head. He realises dichotomies are in fact trinities and the key to life is living in that blissful state of equilibrium, where one is no longer pulled from one side to the other side. He knows he must be constantly living on the balance point, the edge of the coin. As the Ancient Greeks stated, when they ruled the world, everything, but everything must be in moderation.

Francis understands another trilogy when he realises all humans have three lives, a public life, a private life and a secret life. To understand one's self, one must uncover their own secret life. It is by tapping into the secret lives of their victims, oppressors are able to subjugate. Oppressors reveal to us that we are schizophrenic and tell us schizophrenia is abnormal. But by understanding our

secret life, we, as Francis did, come to understand, everyone is schizophrenic. Schizophrenia is normal. All animals, in fact, are schizophrenic. Francis learns there are no addictions. People are not addicts, they are just immature in their knowledge and understanding of themselves. People often, consciously or subconsciously, use their '*addiction*' as a tool to control others. It is all about control. The only way to find peace and contentment in life is to stop trying to control others, and learn how to control oneself. Once a person learns how the body, mind and soul work as a complete unit, they learn how to control what are commonly referred to as addictions. Once they acquire this understanding, from that moment on, from that epiphany, they will always be in control of themselves. They will control their desires, their wants, and their needs; in essence, they will control their life and they will have no need to control other lives. Everyone has this choice, whether they are conscious of it or not, whether they admit it to themselves or not.

The common person, figuratively looking in a mirror, sees what they want to see, they see the person they wish to be, the person of their dreams, which would commonly be a superhero, or a person they wish to emulate. This image is a dream world. To become the person of their dreams, one must first look at themselves realistically. They must pick out their imperfections and work to change them in order to become what they wish to be. If one sees themselves as perfect already, there is no room for change. This is all explained in philosophical books such as Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. Franklin suggests we write down a list of what characteristics we would like to change. We take one item on the list and work on it for period of time. When we are satisfied with the change we have made in our

self, we move on to the next item on the list. Remarkably, Franklin states, as we progress we see new items to be added to the list and we find we are never finished correcting what we wish to change in ourselves. As items come off the list, further items are added to the list.

Francis comes to appreciate that we, every one of us, are All-One, all the same, but, all tied to each other in some way. Like cells in a body, we, as people, live in a symbiotic relationship with other people, with other species of animals, as well as plants, fungi, bacteria and all forms of life. We are all important and we all have a role to play. Who can say a brain cell is more important than a heart cell, a bowel cell is less important than a lung cell? People, just like cells in a body, are all different, but all are equally important, despite their differences in shape and function. Besides differences, all cells have similarities; and all are necessary for the body to properly function. Kill a few brain cells and the body still works in a normal fashion. But, kill many brain cells and the body suffers, and possibly dies. Kill a few people, a few animals, or a few species and the earth continues. How many deaths does it take before the earth suffers, before all life on earth suffers? As he begins to understand his surroundings, Francis comes to believe, we may, one day, find an answer to this question.

Francis learns secrets about the body, the mind and the soul. He learns one must have diverse knowledge to understand oneself. This includes knowledge of thought, as well as knowledge of science, including physics and biology. Without this knowledge, one can never understand oneself. When one begins to understand one's self, one understands why nobody is more important than anyone else. One should never believe another person is superior or inferior to

one's self. One should never be obsequious or authoritative towards others, but each person must keep in the middle ground between the two extremes. One should act the same to everyone. The Queen, a movie star, a religious leader, or a scholar; none of these people are more important than you or me. Nobody is better because of the lottery of birth, or by what they inherit, physically or materially. Everyone is the same. We are All-One.

This is not a religious story, even though it revolves around religion. Whether we know it or not, religion is deeply ingrained in our society. Religion is so much a part of our society, openly as well as surreptitiously, there can be no escape from religion; and because Francis is striving for truth, he must, at some point, question religion. Historical works are commonly promoted as truth, despite, for the most part, being works of fiction, just collections of myths, fairy-tales, and legends.

The Bible is an example of what many see as an "historical" work, but by using typology, philology, and etymology, scholars show this book is indeed just a collection of ancient stories and mythological legends. In many books, including The New Testament, prophecies are written after the fact, and fables are reworked in an effort to create something which appears to be new and miraculous.

If I announced to the world, 'I am Your Saviour, your rightful ruler', the public would not be long in asking me who I think I am, and what my name is. This does not happen when it comes to Jesus Christ in The Bible. Nobody asks what this man's name is. He is announced as Jesus Christ which translated into English is simply Saviour Messiah. Messiah actually means the anointed one, or the rightful

ruler. Jesus Christ is the description of a man, not his name. In fact, the name of this man is not given anywhere in The Bible. Is it expected the reader should assume Messiah is a surname and Saviour is this man's first name?

This man, whom we know as Jesus Christ, in fact, in real life, had a name. His name was Titus Flavius. He was a Roman Emperor and he was literally deemed to be a god; having been proclaimed a god by the Roman Senate. Like Jesus of The Bible, Titus was the biological son of another god, Vespasian, who was also proclaimed to be a god by the Roman Senate. So, in essence, Titus was indeed the son of a god. However, he was born later than Jesus of The Bible was supposedly born. Since Jesus of The Bible is a fictional character, he could never have been crucified on a cross. The Romans had many gods, while supposedly monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, proclaim there exists only one god, whom they say is God, the true god. In truth though, even monotheistic religions have more than one god.

A rose by any other name is still a rose. And a god by any other name is still a god. By tradition, the Pope (Pope, translated into English, is Father), the head of the Roman Catholic Church, who is the modern day Roman Emperor or Caesar (Caesar, in English, is also Father) has the authority to declare any mortal to be a god. However, the Pope does not refer to these beatified persons as gods, they are referred to as saints. However, these saints are believed to have supernatural powers, just like gods, and people pray to these saints like they do to gods. Officially, however, saints are not gods, since The Church has declared there is only one true god. One God? What about the holy trinity? Are the Son and the Holy Ghost not gods? What about the Devil? Is he not a god? Does he not have supernatural powers? How many gods does the Catholic Church actually have?

Probably just as many as the Romans had, maybe more.

So far, to my knowledge, nobody has been able to prove God of The Bible exists.

Also, to my knowledge, nobody has been able to prove God does not exist.

Likewise, nobody has been able to prove Titus Flavius was or was not a true god.

What does this all mean? It means nobody can be certain of anything.

What does all this have to do with Francis Humphrey's coming of age? Francis finds a key which unlocks his mind. This is the beginning of his awareness. This is the beginning of his journey into enlightenment.



MAY 23, 1975

As she looked over the agenda, Margaret MacDonald was surprised to see that a man named Francis Humphrey had asked to speak at the public forum. She wondered if this was the same Francis Humphrey whom she had gone to school with from grades two to ten. Surely there could not be another person with a name such as that? As she thought about her former schooldays, she suddenly felt sorry for Francis. She anticipated his impending embarrassment as he would try to make his presentation. Like the other speakers, he would have limited time to voice his opinions and concerns. She remembered how Francis had stuttered and stammered so badly. She wondered how he would be able get more than a few words out of his mouth in the five-minutes he was allotted.

Margaret felt her cheeks flushing as her thoughts went back to one incident in particular. Wishing to belong, she had succumbed to peer pressure. She had participated with a group of fellow students in teasing Francis. It had been in grade three or four. One of the boys had been mocking Francis, probably, as usual, taunting that his mother wore army boots, or his father was a sissy, a pansy. She remembered, Francis was standing in the schoolyard with his arms dangling by his sides, attempting to speak, but only stuttering. He could not get one complete word out.

One girl yelled, "What's the matter Francis, cat got your tongue? Cat got your tongue? Cat got your tongue?"

First, there was one, then another, and another, until the whole group joined in, circling Francis and taunting in unison, "Cat got Francis' tongue! Cat got Francis'

tongue! Cat got Francis' tongue! Cat got Francis' tongue!"

Francis silently stood while he repeatedly clenched and unclenched his fists which were dangling from his flaccid arms. He was trying desperately to hold back the tears which were forming in his eyes. Fortunately for Francis, the sound of the bell saved him, recess was over. Everyone turned and ran for the door; everyone except Francis. At the door, Margaret had turned and witnessed Francis wiping his eyes with his sleeves as he, with shoulders hunched forward, and face flushed, slowly made his way back to the building.

Having now matured, Margaret knew she had allowed herself to be other-directed. It was peer pressure that enticed her to participate in mocking Francis. She felt ashamed. If only she could take it back. If only she had, back then, the courage to stand up for Francis. Her eyes were hot, her faced burned, as she recalled that day.

She remembered another day when she learned Francis did not seem to have as much of a speech impediment while away from school. They were a month into grade five, they were both ten-years-old. One evening, she met Francis in front of Robertson School. Because it was almost dark, she was hurrying home from her girlfriend's house. She was surprised to see Francis entering the schoolyard.

Emulating her mother, a compulsive busybody, Margaret instinctively took control of the situation. Francis should not be going into the school playground by himself after dark. It was against the rules. Margaret spontaneously yelled to Francis, "Where are you going? It's getting dark! You should be on your way home."

Shocked and surprised, Francis stopped in his tracks. He turned and answered, "Sp ... Sp ... Sput ... Sputnik. Off to see Sputnik."

"Who?"

Remarkably, possibly because he felt more relaxed being alone with Margaret, or maybe it was because he was in such a state of excitement and anticipation, Francis continued fluently, "You know, Sputnik, the Russian satellite. If you lie on your back looking up, you can see it moving across the sky. You know it's Sputnik, cause it's the only star that's moving so fast."

"Really?"

"Yes. I'm going back of the school, cause there's no lights there and I can see Sputnik better, much better. Wanna come?"

Margaret had heard her father talking about Sputnik as he was reading the newspaper, but Margaret hadn't taken much interest in it. She was curious though, and, because she had a younger brother, she had been trained to take a motherly and bossy attitude with children. She felt it was her job to watch over Francis. Otherwise, she thought, he would probably get into trouble. She ran towards Francis, her curiosity and motherly instinct overruling her reluctance.

Francis, upon seeing Margaret would be coming with him, urged her along, "Come on we have only a few more minutes. You can lie beside me and I'll show you how to find it. You don't need no binoculars, but I brought mine along. You can actually see it with just your eyes, it's so very bright."

As they walked to the centre of the playground, Margaret asked questions, "Does it have headlights?"

"No, silly! Just like the moon, it reflects the sun. You know, like we studied at

school."

Margaret remembered very little about the solar system, but Francis seemed to know a great deal about it. He told her he had books at home which he was reading. That evening, having no friends, he was happy to share his excitement and interest with another human being.

As they lay down side by side, Francis looked at his watch, which had radioactive hands and numbers which glowed in the dark, "It should be visible in just a few more minutes."

Pointing to a spot above the school roof, Francis continued, "It will appear just there, almost right above that black pipe, you know, the sewer stack."

And, as Francis had predicted, it did appear. Francis kept on talking as the pair watched the tiny light moving slowly across the sky, faster than stars or planets, but slower than an aeroplane. They took turns looking at it with the binoculars. When Sputnik was directly above them, Francis and Margaret rotated their bodies so their feet pointed in the opposite direction. This way they could continue watching Sputnik as it moved to the opposite horizon.

After the satellite disappeared from view, the pair continued to lie motionless and silent, staring at the cloudless sky filled with stars. Eventually, Francis turned and looked towards Margaret. In the dim light, he thought she was beautiful. Margaret looked back at Francis. Despite it being a cool evening in October, a strange warmth came over her. Maybe it was because she was wearing her warm fall coat? Like confederates sharing a secret, the two smiled at each other. She squeezed Francis' hand.

Francis continued with his explanation, "If we wait nearly an hour it will appear again. It takes about an hour and a half to go all the way around the world. One day they're going to make a bigger one, and they're going to put a man in it, and he'll fly around and around our planet, it will be maybe faster than this one. It's amazing, is it not?"

Margaret did find it amazing, and the next day her father was impressed when she related how she had seen Sputnik in the sky. That evening, Margaret took her father, as well as her younger brother, Arnold, into the back yard where the streetlights didn't shine. She pointed out to them the satellite moving across the sky. For some reason Margaret now remembered these incidents very vividly.

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Margaret shook away her reveries and looked up to the mezzanine where the public was now gathering. She, along with her colleagues, and the Deputy Minister of Education, who had called this public forum, were seated as in a bear pit protected from members of the public, who were now coming onto the mezzanine above them.

The Deputy Minister liked to keep these meetings formal and orderly. His rule was, in order for someone to give their five-minute presentation, they must submit an application, stating what they were planning to say. Anyone who had not made an application would not be allowed to speak. Each speaker would rise as their name was called, move to the podium where a microphone had been set up, and give their argument. While the individual spoke, nobody, except the clerk, who was

Margaret MacDonald on this particular day, was allowed to interrupt. Margaret would announce when the speaker's time was up.

Margaret had set up three lights in front of her. She would turn on a green light as soon as the speaker began his talk. At four and a half minutes she turned on a yellow light and at the end of five minutes a red light. At this point, she would give each speaker fifteen seconds grace before interrupting and stating they had reached the end of their time.

Ever since the Deputy Minister had set up his new rules, these public forums proceeded orderly and smoothly. Occasionally some member of the public, who had not submitted an application, or for some other reason was denied the opportunity to speak, would start to shout that the meeting was being run unfairly. At the last forum, one man leapt to his feet and yelled that these meetings were just for show and the committee had already made their decision weeks before, behind closed doors. Margaret knew this to be true; these forums were just for show, decisions would have been made previously, by the committee, in private. In order for the government officials to give the perception that citizens' concerns were important, the Deputy Minister claimed that the committee would fairly consider all opinions and suggestions. In reality though, these had no bearing whatsoever on what the government did. Security staff always quickly moved in and removed any unruly persons from the audience.

Margaret, despite being surprised how mature he looked, recognised Francis as he was coming onto the mezzanine. It had been twelve years since she last saw him and, in that time, she could easily see how he had developed. He was heavier and he no longer stooped as he walked. He was taller than she remembered, and he

had a self-assured poise. Margaret was astonished that she had never realised how good looking Francis was, with his dark and wavy hair, his fine features, and his smooth, flawless, clean-shaven skin. He had always had a baby-face. He didn't look twenty-eight.

Her eyes returned to her desk. She counted the applications. There would be twenty-nine speakers. She wondered if she should call Francis to speak first so as not to lengthen his agony. No, she thought, she would call him third. Calling on him first might increase his anxiety.



Margaret last saw Francis just after grade ten. Despite living only two streets away from him, she never ran into him again after that one chance encounter. She had been just leaving the drug store on McPhillips when she had spotted Francis. She called to him, asking how his summer was going. She was surprised to learn he was not going back to school in the fall. He was sixteen and it was expected of him to go to work and begin contributing to the family. He was to start his new job the following week. She tried to, but she could not remember where his new job was. Francis had told her that his father had started working at fifteen, and his grandfather at age twelve. They both did fine and there was no need for more education. Francis parroted his father by telling her, more schooling only spoils you. 'Don't need it,' he had stated, 'my father and grandfather did alright without it.'



Francis, even as a child, did not always stutter. He only had trouble getting his words out while under stress. At school, being continually teased and bullied, Francis was always under stress. If any of the children had bothered to get to know him, Francis could probably have carried on a decent conversation on a one-to-one basis. Also, at home, with only his parents, he spoke just fine, albeit, usually answering his strict father in monosyllables.

On Minnegaffe Street, where he lived, Francis had one friend, Mr. Kapusta, an older bachelor who lived directly across the street from him. These two often had lengthy conversations on various topics, despite the fact that Mr. Kapusta spoke broken English with a thick Ukrainian accent. Because he worked evenings on the railway, Mr. Kapusta, during the day, would walk across the street to give advice to Francis. This advice often concerned gardening and yard work.

At the age of eleven, despite being small for his age, Francis had been given the task of looking after the yard. His father had listed his duties, shoveling snow in winter, and, in the summer, cutting the lawn, and looking after the gardens.

It was just after Francis had taken over his yard duties, when Mr. Kapusta and Francis became friends. Francis was turning over his mother's flower garden with a fork, when Mr. Kapusta came up behind him. He spoke right up, "Your dirt no good. You need manure. I get you some. My friend, him farmer, he bring manure. You help yourself when it come. I show you how you should do witt it."

Francis was startled by this interruption, but he welcomed any help offered. He had little trouble shovelling snow, but his knowledge about gardening was limited. Soon, Mr. Kapusta, living alone, and welcoming the friendship, visited Francis

regularly. He would cross the road to the Humphrey yard, not only advising, but also helping Francis with his work.

Occasionally, Mr. Kapusta would call Francis over to his yard, "Come, you give me hand."

Thus the pair worked together, and became close acquaintances, and the Humphrey's yard started to outshine most yards in the neighbourhood. Looking out the front window one day, Mr. Humphrey remarked with pride in his voice, "Our yard is looking nice, almost as nice as Matt Kapusta's."

It was shortly after that, on a Sunday, when Mr. Kapusta was helping Francis prune a small bush, Mr. Humphrey stepped out and greeted Mr. Kapusta, "Good morning Matt. I was just telling the Missus how the yard is looking so nice since you began giving Francis a helping hand."

Mr. Kapusta stood up with a wide smile on his face. Francis was shocked to hear him answer Mr. Humphrey's statement in Ukrainian, and his father seemed to understand. The two carried on a conversation with Francis' father speaking English, and Mr. Kapusta answering in Ukrainian.

After his father went back indoors, Francis commented, "You were speaking Ukrainian to my father."

"Sure I was. You don't know your fawder speak Ukransky? What you tink? His mudder Ukrainian girl. You not know dat?"

Francis did not know that. In fact he knew very little about his family. None of his relatives lived close by, and Francis knew almost nothing about them. Francis,

however, asked no questions. Instinctively, he was certain there were secrets he wasn't supposed to know.

At dinner, on his sixteenth birthday, Francis' father had remarked, since Francis was now old enough to leave school, he should be looking for a job. Mother interjected stating Francis should at least complete his grade ten.

His father looked up sternly, "There's no need for that, grade nine, grade ten, what's the difference. He knows how to read, write, and do numbers. That's all he needs."

Mother argued, "It's only two months to go, and Mr. Cumbers promised Francis a full-time job come July."

"At A&P? That so called full-time job would only be for summer vacation. In September he would be back just working Saturdays. No, what he wants is a permanent, full-time job, and he should be looking for one."

Francis sat silently, contemplating his plate while slowly bringing little morsels to his mouth. He had learned it did no good to interject while his parents bickered. If he became excited he would begin to stutter, and, this would unsettle his father, and cause his mother to fret over him. In the end, as usual, Mother agreed to acquiesce to her husband's demands. Francis would look for a job.

Did his father know that Francis continued going to school while pretending to daily go out and look for work? This was never mentioned. However, Francis and his mother kept up their charade until June the twenty-eighth, when, at the dinner table, Francis announced he had found a job at North-West Box Company. He

would start at seven o'clock sharp on the second of July, the day after the holiday.

Father broke into a sincere smile. He got up and left the room, coming back with a bottle of his homemade wine, stating, "Time for a celebration. Francis is now a man contributing to the household. He is no longer a parasite."

This was not entirely true, as Francis had been working on Saturdays for two years at A&P. Each payday he would give his mother his pay-envelope. She would carefully check it against his pay stub before handing back to Francis his niggardly allowance. What mother did with the rest of his pay, Francis did not know, but, presumably, it was to cover his room and board.

When Francis had been procrastinating about looking for a permanent job, he was certain he would begin full-time work come July at A&P. It was only because the rug was pulled out from under him, that Francis got a job at North-West Box.

Mrs. Main, the senior cashier, did the scheduling at A&P. During the school year, she had put Francis down to work every Saturday from six in the morning till two-thirty in the afternoon. Francis was happy to start work before the store opened, and to get off early in the afternoon, since this gave him plenty of time before supper to do other things.

The previous summer, for vacation relief, Francis had been scheduled to work eight hours from Monday to Friday, and just four hours on Saturday, to give him forty-four hours a week. Francis was counting on working the same hours the coming summer, and he planned on approaching Mr. Cumbers with a request to keep him on full-time in the fall. Francis knew everyone was happy with his work, and, because business was picking up, they were always behind in stacking shelves.

That was the argument Francis was planning on presenting to Mr. Cumbers at the end of summer.

It was the last week in June, when Mrs. Main informed Francis he would not be working full time over the summer. Mr. Cumbers had hired the butcher's son, Stan Windsor, to work during the summer months. Francis could feel the blood rushing to his head. Stan Windsor was a nemesis to him. He was a big football playing bully who, in the schoolyard, accompanied by his cronies, would sometimes initiate attacks against Francis.

Mrs. Main tried to put salve on the wound by telling Francis she still had him scheduled to work every Saturday, as they needed the extra hand. Stan could not work on the week-ends. Rather than easing his pain, Mrs. Main's last remark inflamed Francis. He knew Stan, the football hero, had all the girls after him, and he liked to party and go on dates. He would not want to be at work for six in the morning on Saturday if he had been staying up late the previous night partying and carousing. Francis wanted to ask Mrs. Main why he should be the one who always got the dirty end of the stick, but he held his tongue. He knew it wasn't her fault, she was just doing as she was told.

Francis was now greatly concerned. He would need to tell his father he would not be working full-time, and his father would question how seriously he had been looking for a job.

Having finished his exams, on a Tuesday morning, Francis was free to do his yard-work. He needed time to think, and the physical activity made him feel better. He was planning to look for a job the next day, hoping, if he was successful, he would

not have to give his father the bad news.

While he was contemplating his options, Mr. Kapusta came up behind him and greeted him, "How your day go?"

Mr. Kapusta could see that Francis, as he looked up, was clearly upset. He questioned Francis, "Sometink wrong, maybe?"

Francis never held back any thoughts or feelings from Mr. Kapusta, who always listened and never criticised. Francis related what had transpired at A&P, and how his father would be upset, because he had not been actively seeking employment.

"You no worry, I tink of sometink. I have friend. We see."

The next day, Mr. Kapusta had some good news, "I have friend at box company. I arrange." Handing Francis a piece of paper he went on, "You go tomorrow, see dis lady; here her name. You go eight o'clock. Dey need hard worker. I put in word for you."

Francis took the paper on which was written in a feminine hand, obviously not Mr. Kapusta's writing, 'Mrs. Glendenning, North-West Box Company, 8:00 AM, Thursday, June 27, to fill out an application for employment.'

Francis rode his bicycle the mile and a half to the box plant, arriving early at seven-thirty. He felt extremely anxious, worrying if he could keep his stuttering under control. The front door was locked. However, the big loading door at the side of the building was open. Francis peeked into it.

"Can I help you young man?" A middle-aged man, wearing a brown denim smock,

shouted as he approached Francis.

Francis said nothing. He handed over the paper to the stranger.

"You're to see Mrs. Glendenning are you? Come along then. Follow me."

The man led the way into the office at the front of the building, and pointed to a wooden chair behind a small desk as he stated, "Sit right there young fellow." He then handed the paper back to Francis.

The man returned a few minutes later with an application for employment and a pen. "Here you go. Fill this out as best you can. There's a phone book in the drawer if you need to look up a reference. Mrs. Glendenning should be here shortly." He turned and left Francis by himself.

When Mrs. Glendenning arrived, Francis handed her the completed application form.

Looking it over, Mrs. Glendenning murmured, "I see you've worked at A&P. Do you know Mrs. Main?"

"Ye ... Ye ... Ye ... Ye ... Yes."

"Good. Do you mind if I contact her?"

"Ne ... ne ... no. She, she, sh, sh, should be at work n, n, n, now ... she, she, she, always arrives early."

Mrs. Glendenning smiled, "Good! Just follow me." As she led the way back to Shipping and Receiving. She introduced Francis to the man whom he had met

earlier, "Mr. French! This is Francis. Could you have a word with him while I check over his application?"

Mr. French answered, "Fine, fine." And turning to Francis, "Do you know how to sweep, my boy?"

"Ye ... Ye ... Yes."

Pointing to a push broom, Mr. French simply stated, "Good, take that broom and show me what you can do. Start from here and work towards the wall."

If there was one thing Francis was experienced at, it was sweeping. One of his duties at A&P was to keep the back warehouse clean. He took the broom, along with a scoop of sweeping compound, which he spread across a section of the floor, and he proceeded to sweep.

Five minutes later, Mrs. Glendenning came back. She spoke with Mr. French for a few minutes before approaching Francis, "Will you be able to start work next Tuesday, the day after the holiday?"

"Ye ... Ye ... Yes."

"Good. Be here promptly at seven and report here to Mr. French." Mrs. Glendenning shook Francis' hand and wished him well.

And that was that. Francis had a new job.



The second speaker went back to his seat, and, when the Deputy Minister nodded to Margaret, she called out, "Francis Humphrey".

Francis rose and walked to the podium. He had no notes to place on the lectern, and he stood slightly to the side of it, while surveying, first the people in the gallery, and then the officials on the floor below. That day, he was the one and only speaker to address the audience before giving his talk:

Honourable Chairman, distinguished officials of our government, committee members, fellow citizens:

Manitoba law clearly states, any publically funded institution which endeavours to educate our children may not include religion in their curriculum. The reason for this is, officially, we are a democracy which welcomes all religions, and shows bias towards none. We are a secular state which favours no religion above the others. Consequently, the traditional reading of the King James Holy Bible in public schools has been discontinued; and, in fact, outlawed.

Educational institutions, which we refer to as private schools, and which are now receiving funding from the state, must follow the state's example, by not favouring one particular religion over another. This is not happening. These private schools were originally formed as faith based, privately funded, schools, which teach only their own particular brand of religion. By continuing this practice, despite, now receiving public funding, they are going against the law.

I realise that those who make the laws, may also change the laws. One day this law may be altered. But, until that day comes, I insist that the current law be obeyed.

I realise that religion, for several thousand years, has become entrenched in our society and our many cultures. Because of this, I am suggesting, in order to follow the letter of the law, and to satisfy everyone involved, all schools should teach religion. This includes private schools as well as public schools. But, rather than teaching religion on a theological basis, it should be taught as history. In this way there would be no bias against, or towards, any religion. The

students would learn why we have religions, why we have many different religions, how religions came to be, how religions have been spread, and what impact on people and societies this spread of religion has had. Rather than learning about one particular religion, students would learn about all religions, and religions in general. Would this not give all citizens a better understanding about not only the differences, but also the similarities, that various groups in our society share?

Is it not time for Canada, a multi-cultural country, to act as an example for the rest of the world? We may show, how a country of various cultures, may be a place of accord, rather than of discord. Could our example help change the world? Would our example not help to bring peace and understanding to the whole world?

After asking this last question, Francis again surveyed the crowd as if waiting for someone to answer his question. Nobody spoke. Everyone sat in dead-silence. Francis looked straight at the Deputy Minister and simply stated, while slightly bowing, "Mr. Chairman."

That was that, Francis gave no thank-you as he turned and walked back to his seat.

Spontaneously, one man in the gallery stood up and started to clap his hands. The audience, first one-by-one, and then in pairs, and then groups, jumped up and joined in the clapping and shouting. The Deputy Minister forgot himself.

Unconsciously, he raised his hands to join in the applause, and then, remembering decorum, and the rule of having no applause, he began beating his gavel, while shouting for order.

Margaret was astonished by the profound change in Francis. All throughout his talk, she, while sitting in a state of complete shock, with her mouth slightly ajar,

and her eyes fixed on Francis, forgot to look at her stop-watch. What happened to the backward, tongue-tied, pathetic little boy, whom she once knew?

Margaret was determined to meet with Francis. First, she felt compelled to apologise to him, and secondly, she had to admit, she felt a deep, physical, attraction towards him. As the last speaker finished, Margaret turned to her administrator who was sitting to her right. She lied, "I need to use the lavatory. I'll be right back."

Not waiting for his consent, Margaret rushed up the stairs and found Francis, who was standing and looking out a window facing Memorial Boulevard. Her heart was pounding and she realised this wasn't just because of the physical exertion from racing up the staircase. She hesitated, trying to calm herself, as she slowly approached him.

"Francis," she quietly called as she drew up just behind him.

Francis turned with a questioning look on his face.

Margaret forced a smile as she stated, "You probably don't remember me. We were at school together. It's Margaret, Margaret MacDonald. I was Margaret Simpson back then."

Francis returned her smile, "Yes, yes, of course I remember. The last time we saw each other was in front of the drugstore. I was to start work the next week."

Margaret was shocked that he remembered, but she held her composure as she continued, "Funny, we only live two blocks away from each other, but we have never come across each other over these past twelve years."

"MacDonald? Yes I heard you got married, and moved to a different part of the city."

"Yes, I did Francis. I'm flattered you remember."

"You were always so nice. You were one of the nicer children. And, we did spend eight years in the same class together. Also, we had our First Communion together."

In her shame, Margaret could feel herself turning crimson when Francis credited her with being nice. She had taunted him, the same as the others. She had second thoughts. She felt she should go. Holding out her hand she spoke, "It is nice to see you again, Francis. I have missed those schooldays, as well as you ... and the others. They were young, innocent days, were they not?"

Truth be told, for Francis, those days at school had been agony. It wasn't until Francis, after a mystical experience which had pulled him from his perpetual state of anxiety, did Francis realise he had been in a state of fear and unease on each and every one of his days at school. Anxiety grew to be his normal state, and that was why it never occurred to him that he had been anxious and afraid. He recalled the knots in his stomach as he walked towards the heavy, brass and oak, double doors, under the portico, leading to the school foyer. That, he knew, was all in the past, and he now lived, each and every day, enjoying the gift of life.

Francis took Margaret's hand. He squeezed warmly, "Come. Do you have time for tea or coffee? I would love to hear all about your life."

Margaret tried to pull her hand away, but Francis held tight, "I insist. Come the

cafeteria's right here."

Margaret said nothing, but she moved towards Francis, and the couple, together, walked into the eating area with Francis still lightly holding onto Margaret's fingers until they reached the racks of heavy restaurant china, where they each took a white mug.

With their coffees in hand, Margaret and Francis took a table overlooking Assiniboine Avenue. People were strolling along the river pathway, some in groups, some by themselves, and some couples walking hand in hand.

Francis began, "Over the years, despite still living with my mother in the same house where I grew up, I have seen nobody from my schooldays. What about you, now that you've moved away, do you keep in touch?"

Margaret hesitated. How much did he know? How much is he libel to learn if he did meet some of the old crowd? Again, she was embarrassed. He knew she had been married. Did he know she married in June, just after she graduated from grade twelve, and she was three months pregnant with her first child? She realised she had to be truthful. She knew it could be damaging for her to be caught up in a lie, whether her intentions were admiral, or not. "To be honest with you Francis, I went back home to live with my parents. Jake and I are divorced. I'm a single mom, and if it wasn't for my mother, I wouldn't be able to cope. My father died six months ago, and it's just my mother and me now."

"I'm sorry to hear about your father. I hadn't heard. But, Jake helps in supporting your child, and he visits, does he not?"

"No. Just before Alice, my youngest, was born, Jake walked out on me. He moved out to the West Coast with a couple of his buddies. Apparently, he's working in some plywood factory. I never hear from him."

"Oh, I see. So you're on your own. Well, things could have turned out better, I suppose. But, how many children do you have then?"

"Just the two girls, Olivia is my oldest, she's ten, and Alice is just turning six." Opening her purse, Margaret pulled out a few photos, handing them to Francis.

Slowly looking over the pictures Francis proclaimed, "My, my, they are such nice looking girls. They take after their mother, that's for certain." He then turned to Margaret, "Are you happy?"

Margaret smiled ever so slightly, "I'm content. Things haven't turned out so bad. They could have been much worse. At least he, Jake I mean, never beat me, and my two angels are wonderful. Mind you, I could never have done it without my parents."

"I suppose your parents were not thrilled when you became pregnant."

Despite Margaret's cheeks starting to burn, she, determined to be strictly candid, stuck to the truth, "They were not happy. My mother planned for me to go to university. I would have been the first in my family. When father found out, he went wild, calling Jake an effing asshole. Even after we married, Father never warmed up to him. Jake never really worked. He started at the railway, but he didn't like working nights and week-ends, as he wanted to be with his friends."

"It sounds like things were a bit rough."

"They were. My mother would slip me a few dollars now and then. She worried about the baby and wanted good food for her. In a way, it was a relief when Jake, with two of his friends, ran off. That's when Mom told me I should come home."

Suddenly Margaret remembered her utter shock when she heard Francis' speech. She looked him straight in the eye, "Francis. You spoke eloquently. What happened?"

"What do you mean what happened?"

"You ... well ... you ..."

"What you're trying to say is, I used to have a problem with my speech?"

"Yes, that's what I meant to say. Today though, you spoke like an orator. You never stuttered."

"No, I did not. I gave all that up years ago. I even forget sometimes that I ever did ... stutter that is."

Margaret appeared baffled, "How did it happen; I mean, what do you mean, you gave it up. One doesn't just give something like that up. That's like me saying I gave up my addiction to ice-cream, just like that."

"That's what I'm telling you. I gave it up like you would give up smoking, drinking alcohol, or any other thing you allow yourself to be controlled by. It's all amazingly simple."

"What are you talking about? What are you telling me?"

"Of course you don't understand. That was never part of your education. However, as I said, it is all very simple, but the world makes it complicated. It's all part of a control game. But, it would take all night, a dozen nights, for me to explain it to you. Why don't we just leave it for now, and we'll go back to it sometime when we're not so tired. I don't know about you, but I've had a long day and I'm bushed."

"Look Francis, something has happened to you, and I want to know what. But, I don't want you to pull my leg. I've had enough of people pulling my leg to last me for the rest of my lifetime, thank-you very much. Now, tell me what was that speech all about? What are you getting at?"

"I have this innate sense of fairness and justice. Politicians are always carrying on about discrimination and xenophobia and how Canada does not discriminate, but they are a big part of the problem. For example, they continue to allow private schools to teach one particular religion. It just enforces the idea that a certain group may proclaim they are 'God's chosen people', other groups professing they will be the only ones 'allowed into heaven', and other groups stating they have been delegated by their god, 'to conquer the world'. It's all sheer nonsense which only leads to war and strife. It's time for it all to come to an end." Francis laughed as he looked into Margaret's eyes, "Okay, that's enough serious talk for one day. How do you travel?"

Margaret looked puzzled and Francis explained, "I'm asking, how are intending to get home? I have my car out front. Do you want a lift since we only live two streets apart?"

"Yes, I would appreciate it." Looking at her watch Margaret jumped up, "Oh my,

look at the time. I hope they haven't locked up." As she turned to run, she added, "I'll meet you at the front doors. I just have to clean up."

Francis walked to the front vestibule, smiling on the way. He was happy about meeting up with one of his former classmates. He felt nostalgic and wanted to reminisce, despite the fact that he realised he would probably be re-living former pain. Except for this encounter with Margaret, these last twelve years, he had spoken to nobody whom he had gone to school with. Why would he? He had made no friends throughout his ten years at school. His shyness and his stuttering habit prevented him from doing so. He looked at his watch, it was twenty-to-nine. His mother would be waiting, wondering where he was. He said he'd be home by this time. She'd have the kettle on and the tea things on the table. With his dad dead, and with Francis being an only child, his lonely mother tended to dote over him.

Margaret approached, "Okay, I'm ready. Thanks so much for the lift. At this time of the evening the buses can be unreliable."

As they drove along Broadway Boulevard towards Memorial, Margaret remembered something. Looking over at Francis she asked, "Earlier you said you were living with your mother. Is your father not around?"

Staring straight ahead Francis answered, "My father is dead. He had a heart attack when he was forty-six."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. I guess that's when Jake and I were living in Alberta. I hadn't heard." Not knowing why, she added a question, "Is it hereditary?"

Francis was silent. As the seconds ticked by, Margaret felt uncomfortable enough

to add, "I mean, are you concerned about your heart?"

Francis slowed down and stopped at a red light. He gently turned and with a very pensive look answered, "I never thought about that. In fact I've never thought about death until just now. I've just been simply enjoying life."

Margaret turned towards the front, "Your light's green."

Francis shifted into first gear and pulled away.

Margaret wondered how Francis could be enjoying life. He suffered all those years at school, and now he was still living with his mother. She wondered if he might be queer. She remembered he had always been different. She looked over at him. He didn't look queer, but how does one know? He was definitely a handsome man, looking somewhat like Montgomery Clift. She remembered she had read in one of those Hollywood magazines that Montgomery Clift was homosexual. Now she felt very disconcerted. Trying to sound as casual as possible, she inquired, "Are you dating?"

As soon as she asked, she thought, what a stupid thing to say. He's going to think I'm coming on to him.

Francis didn't seem to notice, "No, I really haven't dated. I've been so busy with work, school, and my social life."

Social life, she thought, what kind of social life? Then she remembered he was not the young boy she knew twelve years ago. He was now a grown man who was well put together and he displayed an air of self-assurance. Of course he'd have a social life. He must have a string of girls on his line. She wanted to see more of him. She

wanted to know more about the change in him and how it came about, but she didn't know how to proceed with her inquiries without sounding like she was giving him the third degree. She asked, "You mentioned school. What have you been taking in school?"

Francis answered with no hesitation, "Oh yes, I've completed my Grade twelve and I've been going to evening classes at university. It was all Mr. Sutton's idea for me to resume my education."

"Who is Mr. Sutton?"

"He's my boss, the owner of North-West Box. We have become very good friends, especially since my dad died."

Again, Margaret wondered if Francis was having a homosexual affair. But the conversation was coming to an end as Francis pulled up in front of the Simpson's house. The car came to a halt and Francis got out. He went around to Margaret's side of the car. Margaret was surprised. She had her hand on the handle, ready to open the door, but, realising what Francis was up to, she hesitated and allowed him to open the door for her. She wondered if Francis was being a thoughtful gentleman, or, if he was just playing a game. She allowed Francis to help her up from her seat, and to walk her safely to the door, where they gazed into each other's eyes.

Margaret felt as if he would kiss her, but he never even tried. He simply stated, "This has been so nice. Let's get together again. I would love to meet Olivia and Alice. I'll tell you what, I'll phone you, and maybe you could bring the girls over to meet Mother. She'd love that. She never had a daughter, and she would be thrilled

to have you and them over for tea. Shall we do it? Don't say no."

Margaret's head was in a swirl. She didn't know what was happening. It was all so instantaneous and confusing. First she thought him to be a suave Cary Grant, then a pansy, and then she thought he was trying to seduce her, and now he wanted to entertain her two daughters. And he remembered their names. Who was this man? She couldn't figure out where he was coming from. And all this talk about simply giving up his stuttering, what was that all about?

However, she didn't hesitate; she accepted his invitation, "I'd be happy to visit with my girls. Do give me a ring."

They said goodnight and Margaret went into the house, but, she turned and peered through the window on the door. Her eyes followed Francis as he walked back to his car, and, she watched as his tail-lights travelled down the street and turned onto Church Avenue before disappearing from sight.

Her mother was up, "Who was that Dear?"

Margaret hated it when her mother called her 'Dear', and she had told her so on several occasions. Tonight she was tired. She answered simply, "It was Francis Humphrey."

"Francis? Did you say Francis?"

Walking into the living room where her mother was seated while watching television and knitting simultaneously, Margaret continued, "Yes, Francis, Francis Humphrey. You remember the Humphreys, they live on Minnegaffe."

"Oh yes, Mrs. Humphrey, I've seen her at school teas and maybe a Tupperware party, way back when? Very nice lady, if I remember correctly. Catholics they are, I think. Yes, now I remember, you had your First Communion with Francis. Mr. Humphrey was there. He worked on the railway. Is that not right?"

"Yes Mother. That's the Humphreys."

"Why was he driving you home? Does he work at The Ledge?"

"No Mother, he was there for the public forum. He gave a presentation."

"Wasn't he the boy with a speech problem?"

Surprised that she remembered, Margaret answered, "Yes, he stuttered."

Her mother turned and looked at Margaret in a knowing way. Margaret answered the silent question, "He did very well. He no longer stutters and he speaks eloquently. More so than most politicians."

"Well isn't that something. Wonders will never cease."

Turning, Margaret bid her mother goodnight. She went upstairs. Both girls were sound asleep. Despite her mother's annoying idiosyncrasies, she was extremely good with the girls. People often told her how polite and well-spoken her 'two young ladies' were.

How different the two girls were from each other. Olivia, like Jake, had long, black, wavy hair, dark chocolate eyes, and olive complexion. But her youngest, Alice, had blonde hair, blue eyes, and very light complexion, just like Margaret. Did people question whether or not they came from different fathers? Margaret remembered

her own father, assuming Jake was the father of both girls, saying that mongrels could come out any shape and any colour. For Margaret, despite their differences, both girls were beautiful and they were absolutely no trouble. She remembered her mother saying, on more than one occasion, if children receive love and security, you will have no problems with them. Margaret knew her parents gave her children everything a child could wish for, including attention. They were better grandparents than parents. Since her father died, her mother was always buying things for the girls. She wondered if maybe her girls weren't getting a bit spoiled.

It took Margaret a long time to fall asleep and she had a restless night. She couldn't make up her mind about Francis. She couldn't believe the change in him. He was extremely attractive. What happened? She wanted to know.

§

When Francis arrived home, he told his mother he was late because he had given Margaret a lift home from the forum. His mother questioned, "Margaret? Which Margaret is that Francis?"

"Margaret Simpson. You know the Simpsons who live on Dalton. She married Jake MacDonald."

"Oh, she's a married woman?"

"She's divorced mother. Her husband works somewhere out west and she has moved back home with her parents. Her father has since died and now it's just her

mother and her, along with her two daughters."

"Francis, how long have you been seeing her?"

"I haven't been seeing her. The last time I saw Margaret was twelve years ago, and I just met her again, at the public forum. She works at the Legislative Building."

"Oh, I see!"

Francis then told his mother about Margaret's lovely daughters, and, how he had asked Margaret if she would like to bring her girls over for tea sometime. "I hope you don't mind Mother, I thought you'd like to have some company."

"Oh! You haven't seen her for over a decade, and now you're inviting her over for tea? Have you been carrying a torch for her all these years?"

Francis started growing impatient, "No Mother, I haven't been in touch with anybody I knew from school. I thought it would be nice to find out how everyone is doing. And, I thought you might like to entertain a couple of young ladies. You spend too much time by yourself. It's not healthy."

His mother could tell Francis was becoming annoyed, so she let it drop. She truthfully told Francis she would be delighted to have the girls over and suggested Sunday lunch would be good, suggesting they could walk to the park after they ate, and she could push the girls on the swings, while Francis and Margaret caught up on old times.

Mrs. Humphrey, especially since her husband passed on, was lonely. Despite their differences, they had a loving marriage, and she missed Albert. Shortly after her

husband's funeral, Mrs. Humphrey started thinking Francis would one day marry, and she could have grandchildren. She admonished herself for not having more children, thinking, if she had five or six, she would probably, by now, have had many grandchildren. That was one of the things she had disagreed on with her husband. She wanted more children, but Albert repeatedly stated children cost money, and he asked why they would want more. He often said Francis was such a joy they needed nobody else. If only she had been persistent. Albert, being raised as an Anglican, could never understand her feelings of guilt when they were committing the sin of using birth control. They never discussed such things, however, just once, she had told him, Catholics usually have more than one child.



SUNDAY OUTING

Sunday was a warm and sunny day. Margaret and the girls arrived by foot, just after eleven o'clock. Mrs. Humphrey immediately warmed up to Olivia and Alice. However, she scrutinised Margaret closely, being very reluctant to trust her motives with Francis. She thought she detected a crow's-foot beside each eye. She knew the two of them were the same age, but somehow Margaret seemed older than her Francis.

Mrs. Humphrey asked if everyone liked egg salad sandwiches, and when everyone nodded yes, she suggested the two young girls could help her prepare them. She had previously boiled a dozen eggs and had prepared the filling for the sandwiches. The girls helped make the sandwiches and also to set the table. The meal went well; with the girls continuing the conversation they had started earlier while helping Mrs. Humphrey in the kitchen. The girls had been telling Francis' mother all about what they were learning at school, and how good they were doing at piano.

During a lull in the conversation, Alice asked Francis if that was his real name. Margaret was obviously embarrassed, if she was closer, she may have lightly kicked her daughter, but she said nothing.

Francis chose to politely answer the question, "Of course Francis is my real name. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I never heard anyone being called Francis before; and it's the name of a mule, not the name of a person."

Francis laughed, "You mean Francis the talking mule, don't you?"

"Yes, we saw him in the movies."

"Well," Francis continued, "there have been a lot of well-known men called Francis."

Despite her mother giving her 'The Look', Alice innocently continued, "What kind of men?"

"Well, Francis Bacon for one."

Both girls immediately broke out into laughter. Olivia was the first to compose herself and blurt out, "Bacon? Now I know you're kidding us. Nobody could be called Bacon, it's something to eat."

Francis, being more child-like than the other two adults, found all this to be very amusing. He continued with his explanation, "Many people have funny names that mean something else. Mr. Kapusta lives across the street from me. His name actually means cabbage in Ukrainian. That's a funny name, Mr. Cabbage. Some people might feel like calling him Cabbage Head. What do you think of that? And, what about Mr. Hamm who lives on your street?"

Olivia burst out, "Mr. Hamm, ha-ha, Mr. Hamm and eggs, I never thought of that before."

Both girls were now convulsed with laughter which became so contagious that everyone started giggling and the girls went into hysterics. Even Mrs. Humphrey, who was rumoured to have no sense of humour at all, broke out into smiles and chuckles.

Francis carried on, "I know a Joe Cinnamon, a Jim Parsley and a Mrs. Rice. What do you make of all that?"

The lunch continued in mirth, and as people were finishing up their meal, Mrs. Humphrey began gathering the dishes. She came right out and stated, "You run along to the park with the girls Francis, while Margaret and I clean up. We'll catch up with you later."

Margaret was taken aback. She was being put on the spot. Was Francis aware how conniving and manipulative Mrs. Humphrey could be? Also, the thought came to her, possibly it would not be a good idea for her to trust Francis alone with her girls. Certainly Mrs. Humphrey had the right to watch over her son, but he was twenty-eight for God's sake; old enough to look after himself. And, if he was a pervert, how could she allow him to be alone with her daughters.

But, Margaret hesitated too long, Francis made the decision for her as he spoke right up, "Oh, yes, I'd love to trot over to the park with the girls. Don't rush now mother. Remember what the doctor said."

As soon as the door closed Mrs. Humphrey gave orders, "I'll tell you what Margaret, I'll wash and you dry."

"That's fine Mrs. Humphrey. I like to dry."

As she scurried about, Mrs. Humphrey asked questions. But, as Margaret noted, these questions were not just to make conversation. It was obvious, Mrs. Humphrey was prying, and questioning her motives.

"Francis tells me you're back living with your mother."

"Yes, after Jake left me I moved back to Winnipeg into my parents' house. Mother looks after the girls so I can work. Father died six months ago. He had a massive stroke."

"Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. My Albert died at a very young age. He was just forty-six. It is nice that you have your mother to help you. Your girls, they are such darlings. I never had a daughter you know. Just Francis; he's the world to me."

Margaret could easily see how possessive Mrs. Humphrey was with Francis. She was thinking that Francis was possibly being suffocated by his mother. However, Margaret could also see Mrs. Humphrey would like grandchildren, especially a granddaughter. But, wasn't she being a bit hasty. After all Francis and her had just recently re-connected and there were no signs of romance between the two of them. Was it just fear on Mrs. Humphrey's part? Was she afraid, if Francis got together with Margaret, there would be no more children, and she would never have a biological grandchild? Well she could assure Mrs. Humphrey that twenty-eight was not too old to bear children. But, on the other hand, why should she even think about this? After all Francis and her were no more than friends.

Mrs. Humphrey sensed Margaret's discomfort and she changed her line of questioning, "You have a younger brother, if I remember correctly?"

"Yes, Arnold, he's a year and a half younger than me. He went south of the border and joined the marines, he's now missing in action. We have no idea if he'll ever be coming home."

"The fighting is over though, is it not?"

"Yes, it is, but there is no news of my brother. There is the possibility he's not dead. We just hope. Apparently, quite a few were captured. The Vietnamese are not giving out names."

"It must be very hard on your mother and you. Your parents just had two children then?"

"No, there were five of us. My three oldest siblings are much older than me. The three of them were born before my father went to war in nineteen-thirty-nine. Arnold and I were born after the war, after my father got out of hospital. He spent a year in hospital, first in France, and then in Deer Lodge Hospital."

"Oh, I didn't realise your father was injured. Was it bad?"

"It was, but he recovered. He was wounded and then he got some sort of infection. That's why it took so long for him to recover."

Mrs. Humphrey turned and looked at Margaret, who now had tears in her eyes,

"Oh, Margaret, I'm so sorry. Are you upset about your father's death?"

"No, I've gotten over that. It's just that I can't stop thinking about Arnold. My mother is very worried. It's the not knowing part which is eating away at her. We haven't been getting any news. Even if we were told he'd been captured would be a comfort."

Mrs. Humphrey saw the tears forming in Margaret's eyes. She wrapped her arms around her and hugged her. Margaret, with so many pent-up emotions, burst into tears.

Mrs. Humphrey comforted her, "There, there my dear. Let it out. It'll do you good."

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When Mrs. Humphrey and Margaret got to the park, Francis was pushing the girls on the swings. Mrs. Humphrey took over from Francis, suggesting, "You go over and entertain Margaret while I push the girls."

The couple sat in silence for several minutes before Margaret began telling Francis about her life. How she was three months pregnant when she got married.

Margaret could not tell Francis, nor anyone else, the absolute truth, but she could tell him one version of the truth, by omitting certain events. That was why she did not start at the beginning, and she did not tell Francis that her first child was not her husband's. She began her tale from when she began to rebel, when she started partying, smoking, and drinking, "Grade twelve was a wild time for me. I let loose and began partying. All the girls were after Jake but he, for some reason, chose me. There was drinking and, I don't know, we somehow started having sex. We would have married anyway, even if I wasn't pregnant. At least I think we would have. I thought Jake was so handsome."

"I remember Jake. He was good-looking, and he was a football star. Of course the girls would want to go out with him."

The couple sat in silence for a while. Margaret thought about why she had become a rebel. Recently, she had read psychological books about girls, as well as boys, who became rebellious after experiencing what Margaret had gone through. Rebellious is often a coping mechanism.

Margaret forced herself to turn and look at Francis. She asked, "Did you ever date anyone on a steady basis?"

"No, no, I never did. I was too awkward and backward. What girl would have dated me? Besides, I was much too busy. Before I quit school, I had my job at A&P, homework, and work around the house, and after, with a full time job, and my other interests, I was much too busy. I never realised how fast the years were going by. Maybe I'm now too old to think about marriage?"

Margaret shocked herself, without thinking, she blurted out, "We are never too old Francis!"

Francis didn't comment, and the couple sat in silence until Mrs. Humphrey and the two girls came back to the bench, "We thought we'd walk to St. Joseph's for an ice-cream, if you don't mind Margaret."

Margaret, shocked, looked up, "Ice-cream? Yes, the girls would love ice-cream on a warm day like this."

Mrs. Humphrey turned and faced her son, "Don't get up Francis. You two stay and relax. I'll take the two girls, and I'll bring them straight back to their home after our treat, if you don't mind Margaret."

Margaret was too surprised at this suggestion for her to think before responding, "Yes, mother will be home. You know my mother, don't you?"

"Oh yes, I've met her a few times. The girls will keep us from getting lost."

After the threesome left, Francis was first to speak, "I can't remember when I have

enjoyed myself so much."

Margaret was serious as she simply stated, "Yes, it has been a wonderful time, and your mother is super; the girls love her."

"Yes Margaret. We've all enjoyed ourselves. I forgot how much young children can make one feel." Then Francis took Margaret's hand as he gazed into her eyes, "Let's don't be strangers Margaret. Let's do this again ... soon. And the girls are welcome to come over anytime, with, or without you."

Despite what happened, and contradictory to Margaret's, and Mrs. Humphrey's suspicions, romance was not on Francis' mind. He had enjoyed himself. His life had been very serious during the last twelve years, and, during this outing, he felt younger and more alive. He truly loved having Margaret and the girls around, but he had convinced himself, many years before, that Margaret could never be any more than just a friend.

Margaret piped up, "You're not like you were. You don't have trouble speaking and you're no longer shy. What happened? You seem so calm and sure of yourself. And you're handsome, much better looking than Jake ever was. What happened to you Francis?"

"Happened? Well, I guess I grew up, that's all. People change, you know."

"You mentioned your boss having an influence."

"Yes, he did. He still does. I'll tell you about it one day."

"When will that be Francis?"

Francis looked at Margaret, "I don't know. But I'll tell you what. I couldn't help notice that your perennial garden is a bit untidy. I don't want to sound as if I'm being pushy or interfering, but, I wouldn't mind coming over and doing a little work in your yard. Mr. Kapusta has taught me a great deal about gardening and I'd love to go to your place to give you a hand."

Margaret didn't know if Francis was being critical or just being a helpful soul. She accepted his offer. She thought that it would be a lot easier to talk if they were working together rather than just sitting. And, she did want to continue with their conversation.



JULY 1963

Cyril Sutton, the owner and plant manager of North-West Box, shortly after Francis began working there, told Francis that life is so amazingly simple, but most people complicate it for themselves, because they are not aware of how simple life really can be.

Mr. Sutton explained, "People fight life, and they waste so much time and energy fighting, they cannot find any joy in life. It's all very simple though; quit fighting and start taking pleasure from life."

It wasn't that simple for Francis though. First he had to unlearn habits and beliefs that he had been indoctrinated with. As Mr. Sutton explained to Francis, he had to get rid of all his 'excess baggage'. Trusting him, Francis listened carefully to Mr. Sutton, and he tried to follow his instructions. After all, Mr. Sutton had been right when he told Francis how simple and easy it would be to rid himself of his stuttering habit. Why shouldn't he also be correct about how one could simply and easily be the person they want to be, and live the life they choose to?

Mr. Sutton emphatically stated, "Every person, no matter who they are, what gender they are, what nationality they are, what creed they belong to, or what colour of skin they have, is master of their own fate. Every person creates their own future, first in their imagination, and then in the physical world. The secret is, there is no secret. All the rules may be found in the local library, if one is willing to take the time and effort to look."

§

On his first day at work, Francis had been assigned to work with Mr. French, who supervised the shipping and receiving department. Francis arrived early and waited at the loading door for Mr. French to arrive. At six-thirty-five Francis saw Mr. French walking onto the parking lot from Inkster Boulevard, where he had gotten off a bus.

As he approached Francis, Mr. French put out his hand, "Welcome aboard my dear fellow. I know we will work well together."

As Mr. French unlocked the door to the warehouse, he looked over at Francis, "I see you have a bag lunch. Come, you may put it in my little fridge which I have in my wee house." Pointing to a small cubicle built onto the shipping room floor, Mr. French carried on with his diatribe, "Mr. Sutton had this structure built for me, so I could have a quiet place to do my paperwork, and use the telephone. Very handy it is. I make tea in the back here, and I have a small fridge for my milk."

Francis put the lunch his mother had made for him the night before, into the fridge.

Mr. French carried on, "At nine I have my tea. Do you have tea or coffee?"

"T ... t ... t ... t ... tea is fine with me."

"Okay we'll have tea at nine. I'll have it ready. Over the next few days we'll go over what is expected of you. To begin, you will be responsible for housekeeping, which means you must keep things neat and tidy. It's easy now, but come winter, you'll

find snow and muck falling off the vehicles as they sit in the warmth. I hope I don't have to tell you when the floor needs doing. I expect you have the maturity to discipline yourself. I find it works best the more independent one is."

§

Mr. Sutton usually parked his car alongside the building, just down from the shipping door. Each morning, on his way to the front office, Mr. Sutton would hang his car keys on a little hook in Mr. French's cabin.

As Mr. Sutton walked by, he greeted Mr. French, "Good-morning Omer. How are things?"

As usual Mr. French replied, "Fine, fine, Mr. Sutton. Was Mrs. Sutton happy with the radishes?"

"Indeed she was. You know how difficult it is to find nice fresh radishes. By the by, Mrs. Sutton will be using the last of your parsnips this morning. They kept very nicely over the winter in my cold room. Guess what I'm having for dinner tonight?"

"I should say chicken soup, Mr. Sutton."

"You should say correctly, Omer." Turning his head towards Francis, Mr. Sutton exclaimed, "My, my, is this the new lad here?"

"Yes indeed Mr. Sutton," motioning to Francis, Mr. French called out, "Francis, would you mind stepping over to meet Mr. Sutton; your boss?"

Francis looked up. Cautiously he walked over to greet the plant manager.

Mr. French introduced Francis, "Mr. Sutton, this is Francis Humphrey, my new assistant."

Shaking Francis' hand, Mr. Sutton greeted him, "Good morning Francis, how are you finding things so far? Mr. French not too hard on you?"

"N... n ... n ... n ... n ... no. He ... he ... he ... he ..."

Mr. Sutton patiently waited as Francis, obviously in agony, struggled to get his words out. It was quite a while before Francis finally was able to state, things were going well for him. Francis was relieved when Mr. French told him he could go back to his duties.

After Francis left, Mr. French explained, "Has a bit of a problem with his speech. He does better when it's just him and me. A bit nervous at meeting the boss, I suppose."

"Yes, I suppose that's what it was." As he was about to walk away, Mr. Sutton turned, "Oh, Omer."

"Yes, Mr. Sutton."

"Would you mind asking Francis to wash my car when you can spare him?"

"Not at all Mr. Sutton."

"I didn't mean right away, only if you might spare him."

"No problem, Mr. Sutton. I'll make certain it's done."

"Thank-you Omer."

After their tea break, Mr. French took Francis around the plant. They started in the front office. To Francis, it seemed a hub of activity, typewriters were clicking, people were conversing on the phone, and others were walking to and fro with papers in hand. Mr. French introduced each person separately to Francis.

For Francis, one person in particular stuck out from the rest. Mr. French introduced Louise Buxton who had been bending down with her back to them while looking into the bottom drawer of a filing cabinet. As Mr. French called to her, Miss Buxton rose and turned while stepping forward. Francis instinctively stepped back as two sharply pointed objects, protruding from a very tight pink angora sweater, seemed to attack him.

At this sight, Francis' mind immediately went back to an advertisement in one of his mother's magazines. It displayed a young shirtless lady, wearing just a brassiere on top, which had two very sharp-looking cones pointing upwards and outwards. From the waist down, this curvaceous young lady wore a very tight plaid skirt. She was sitting on her desk in a very seductive pose. Across the top of the page was the caption, *I dreamed I went to work in my Maidenform® bra*. Surely these two sharp objects could not be a natural shape. Or, possibly they were, Francis couldn't be certain.

Surprised and jolted at this sudden encounter with Miss Buxton, Francis stood with his mouth open, not hearing a word Mr. French said until he repeated, "Come away now Francis", and the two went on to the next employee.

After the tour of the office, Francis and Mr. French walked through the production department. It was extremely noisy. One could hardly hear themselves think. A

gigantic roll of corrugated cardboard was being fed into a huge machine. At the outlet of the machine, the previously blank cardboard came out with printing on it. The printed cardboard continued on its journey into another, bigger machine, and it came out cut into odd shapes. Scrap bits of cardboard shot out the sides of the machine into bins. Further along there was another set of machines. A roll of white cardstock, rather than corrugated cardboard, was being fed in, and, at the outlet of the machine, odd shaped pieces of cardstock with multi-coloured printing shot out.

Back in the quiet of the shipping and receiving department, Mr. French explained the operation to Francis. The final product was various boxes and containers. After being printed and cut, the cardboard pieces were stacked into bales. These bales would be sent to customers who would feed the bales into other machines on their premises. These machines folded and glued the cardboard to make boxes or containers for their product. Mostly, the finished product which the company made were for soft drinks and beer.

After lunch, Mr. French asked Francis to bring in Mr. Sutton's car and wash it. Francis looked dumbfounded and explained that he didn't know how to drive.

"You don't drive?"

"Ne... ne ... ne ... ne ... ne ... no, I ... I never learned."

"You never learned to drive? How then did you get this job? Didn't Mrs. Glendenning not ask you if you had a driving license?"

"Ne... ne ... ne ... ne ... ne ... no. She ne ... ne ... ne ... ne ... never did."

"Well then, this will not do. No, it will not do at all. Running downtown on errands is part of your job. You must drive. There are no ifs, ands, or buts, about it."

As Mr. French walked away, shaking his head, Francis stood with his jaw hanging down. His world was being shattered. Just as he was celebrating his new job, his moment of joy had been deflated. How could he go home and face his parents? His father would be furious. How could he find another job?

When Mr. French returned, Francis was busy polishing the windows on Mr. French's office. Francis waited for the axe to fall as Mr. French came up to him, "Francis, Mr. Sutton would like to see you in his office."

Francis said nothing. He stepped down from the ladder and walked slowly to Mr. Sutton's office. Mrs. Glendenning instructed him to go straight in as Mr. Sutton was expecting him.

As Francis walked into his office, Mr. Sutton looked up, "Francis, my boy, sit down, we have a few things to discuss."

Francis quietly took a seat and Mr. Sutton carried on, "How are you finding things so far?"

Francis wondered why he just didn't come right out and say it, tell him he was fired and for him to go home. However, Francis simply answered the question, "Ge... ge ... ge ... ge ... ge ... good."

"Mr. French tells me you don't drive, is that correct?"

Francis said nothing. He just nodded his head up and down.

"Are you willing to learn?"

Francis didn't answer. He was confused. What did he mean? Did he mean he could get a license and come back? It was not as easy as all that. Didn't Mr. Sutton know his father didn't have a car? How was he to learn? The two sat silently looking at each other.

Finally, Mr. Sutton repeated himself, "Are you willing to learn?"

Francis nodded his head up and down.

"Good. This is what we'll do. Mr. French will teach you how to drive, in the parking lot at first, and then he'll take you onto the road. First thing though, you must get a learners permit. Mr. French will help you with that. You just leave it up to him. Is that okay with you?"

Francis remained silent but again he nodded his head up and down indicating it was alright with him.

Mr. Sutton rose from his chair, walked around his desk, and put out his hand. Francis shook it. "Okay, Francis, it's a deal. You run back to your job. I'm glad we cleared that up. We'll get along fine. I can see that."

Francis left Mr. Sutton's office in a daze. He had been certain he would be fired, and now he had a big job ahead of him. He needed a license to drive. His father had never owned a car and he did not have a license, always relying on public transportation. And now, Francis was to get a license to drive a car. What would his father say? Francis, on the way home that evening, decided not to tell his parents about what had transpired. Instinctively he felt his father would be upset.

Why should Francis be able to do something his father could not? Why should Francis strive to learn more than his father knew? Why should Francis dare try to move above his station in life? How could he rise above his raising? Where he came from, it just wasn't done.

When Francis arrived back on the shipping floor, he noticed Mr. Sutton's car was sitting by the washing station, ready to be scrubbed down. Mr. French showed Francis where the portable vacuum cleaner, pail, soap, wash cloths, and chamois were kept, telling Francis to clean both the inside and out.

As Francis sat on a stool scrubbing one of the tires, Miss Buxton strutted onto the shipping floor, shoulders held back and breasts sharply pointing upwards at an acute angle. She walked directly over to David Smooth, the key sales representative for the company, who was having a conversation with one of the company delivery-drivers. As the driver turned and walked to the cab of his truck, Mr. Smooth turned to Miss Buxton. Francis could not hear the conversation, but, he could not help noticing how Miss Buxton, with her left hand, took hold of the tip of Mr. Smooth's tie, pulling it downwards and towards herself so it came between the two hills on her tight angora sweater. She then encircled the fingers and thumb of her right hand around his tie, slowly and gently moving her hand up and down the tie as if she was savouring the smoothness of the silk. On each stroke, she would momentarily pause at the knot in the tie which rested on Mr. Smooth's neck. She would give this bulging part of the tie a little squeeze before beginning her downward stroke. Francis got an instant erection. Unfortunately, in his sitting position, Francis' penis grew straight down the leg of his boxer shorts, forcing Francis to bend over on the little three-legged stool, in an awkward and painful

manner. As hard as he tried to prevent them, since the summer before, Francis had been getting these spontaneous erections, along with occasional wet-dreams.

Miss Buxton looked towards Francis, whose face was deeply flushed. Afraid that Miss Buxton might approach him and notice his awkward predicament, Francis quickly turned away to resume scrubbing the tire. This hurried movement caused Francis to lose his balance on the three-legged stool and he fell to the floor.

Automatically, Francis rolled himself behind the car where he could not be seen. Reaching into the slit on his smock and down the front of his pants, Francis somehow managed to extricate his penis from his pant leg and pull it up so it sat flat on his belly. He then jumped to his feet and turned to come face-to-face with Miss Buxton, who, leaning towards Francis, softly inquired if he was hurt. As impossible as it might seem, the sexy, whispering voice, as well as a waft of perfume penetrating Francis' nostrils, resulted in his penis becoming even more engorged. Luckily, the loose smock hid Francis' embarrassing appendage.

It seemed as if Miss Buxton was well aware of the effect she was having on Francis. She casually looked down at the front of his smock and smiled while, in a smoky, seductive voice, intimately whispered, "Oh my, everything seems to be alright. Lucky you weren't seriously injured."

Remembering how she had stroked Mr. Smooth's tie, Francis, becoming afraid that Miss Buxton may physically touch him, and verify the existence of his uncontrollable arousal, Francis jumped backwards, tripping over the pail of water and ending up flat on his back.

Rushing over and touching Francis on the shoulder, Miss Buxton blurted out,

"Francis, are you okay?"

Francis instantly pushed himself back onto his feet while nodding his head and proclaiming, "Ye ... ye ... ye ... ye ... ye ... ye ... yes, yes, I'm okay."

Miss Buxton slid her hand from Francis' shoulder, down his arm, to gently seize his hand, which she squeezed and stroked, while she soothingly murmured, "Oh, my poor Francis. It's all my fault. Are you certain you're okay?"

Francis just kept nodding his head up and down. Luckily Mr. French came running over to upright the stool and urge Francis to sit and relax. Eventually, assured that Francis was not hurt, the crowd moved away and Francis carried on washing the car. Very slowly his erection subsided as Francis continued with his job.

That evening, as Francis ate supper with his parents, his father, as usual, asked if there was anything new. Francis just mumbled there wasn't.

§

The next morning, Mr. French handed Francis a *Driver's Handbook*, telling him to study it thoroughly over the week-end, as he would be taking Francis down to Motor Vehicles on Monday to write an exam for his learners permit.

Unbeknownst to Francis, Mr. French, as well as Mr. Sutton, had witnessed the entire incidence with Miss Buxton. They had seen how Francis had painfully disentangled his penis from his pant leg. While Mr. French and Francis were having their tea break, Mr. French came right out and stated, "I see you are having embarrassing moments with your penis."

Francis glowed red as he stared into his tea cup, not daring to look up as his eyes swelled with tears.

Mr. French, ignoring Francis' embarrassment, continued, "Don't worry Francis, one day you'll look back and laugh. It happens to us all at your age."

Francis sat in silence as Mr. French carried on, "I'll tell you a little tale Francis. A Chinese emperor won a major battle and wanted to celebrate. He called his wise philosopher for advice. The philosopher advised the emperor to keep his composure as 'this too shall pass'. A while later the Emperor suffered a major defeat against an enemy state. Again the emperor summoned his wise philosopher who advised the emperor to maintain his composure as 'this too shall pass'. You see Francis that is the way life is. One just needs to simply carry on through the good times as well as through the tough times, as they come and go. I witnessed how you were painfully trying to take control of the situation. I know what you are going through as I, like all young men, went through the same difficulty. It will pass. You see Francis, it is instinct. What's happening to you is basic instinct and you have to take control of your instincts. It's all part of becoming an adult."

Francis tried to smile. He could not look up. He badly wanted Mr. French to stop talking.

Mr. French though, gave one last piece of advice, "Francis, I suggest you invest in a few pairs of jockey shorts. You'll find you will be able to keep your penis in control a lot better. It won't be so easy to get it caught in your pant leg."

Thankfully it was time to go back to work. Francis rinsed out the tea pot and the two cups before going back to sweeping the shipping room floor.

That evening, Francis was in a fret. He wondered how long it would take before he no longer found himself in embarrassing situations. He wished he could talk to somebody about his growing pains, and about his anxieties and frustrations. He continually wished he could quickly grow up. What did Mr. French mean when he spoke about instincts? Is that why he got spontaneous erections? Was it all instinct. How long would it be before he could control them?

§

The next Saturday, Francis took a bus downtown to Eaton's Department Store. As he was looking over the men's underwear, trying to decide which would be best, a man in his late twenties, came up behind Francis. He ordered Francis to lift his arms as he proceeded to measure Francis' waist. Francis was so surprised and shocked he, without thinking, did as he was told.

After taking the measurement of Francis' waist and hips, the man stepped back and looked Francis up and down. He then imperatively stated, "Just as I thought. Come with me," and he turned and walked across the aisle to the youth's department. The man picked up a pair of jockey shorts and turned to Francis, who was following right behind, "These will fit you perfectly. You won't find better than these. Stanfield's, they are made in Canada. Well, made in Newfoundland to be exact. And the price is right, three pairs for a dollar-fifty."

Francis, despite feeling himself colour, nodded his head up and down.

"You'll want the three pairs," the man continued as he picked up another two pairs, "Will there be anything else?"

Francis shook his head no. He pulled out his wallet and handed the clerk a five dollar bill, and accepted his change, along with a dark blue paper bag.

When Francis got home, he put his new underwear into his mother's laundry basket, as he always did with any clothes he wished to be washed. He hoped his mother wouldn't question him in front of his father. He was certain she would eventually say something about his purchase. He imagined her asking, *'Do you think these will be better than your boxer shorts? Your father has always worn boxer shorts. Don't you think they might be too tight and confining?'*

Francis' worries proved to be unfounded. On Tuesday morning, as he opened his underwear drawer, Francis found his new jockey shorts, freshly washed, folded, and neatly put away.

Also, Mr. French was right. Francis found, with wearing jockey shorts, he did have more control over his penis.

On Saturday afternoon, after Francis came home from Eaton's, he walked across the street to see Mr. Kapusta. Francis related how he needed to get a license to drive in order to keep his job. He also told him about his reluctance to tell his parents.

Mr. Kapusta smiled, "You should no be afraid. But, you break mould. Parent teach, no break mould. What dey do, you must do. You no dare be different. Dat is way you be taught. No? Parent no like when child break mould."

Francis was puzzled. He knew his father might be upset about his learning how to drive, but, he wasn't quite aware of the reasoning behind his father's reaction.

Mr. Kapusta, in an emphatic manner, firmly told Francis, "You must tell fawder you need drive for job. Otherwise you lose job. In dis way he understand. It no your fault."

That evening, at the supper table, Francis blurted out, "I need to get a driving license for my job. Mr. Sutton told me I have to get one."

Mr. Humphry looked up, "A driving license? Why is that?"

Without looking up Francis explained, "Mr. Sutton told me I have to deliver and pick up mail and parcels, and things like that. I have to drive the company delivery sedan."

Mr. Humphrey seemed relieved, "Oh, that's okay then. It's all part of the job. It's good to learn things. It shows you're a willing worker, and you don't go against the grain."

A month later Francis took his road test. When he passed the test and was handed his new license, he began to feel more secure, and he felt less anxious about the possibility of losing his job. However, it took several weeks for it to really sink in, and for Francis, to finally feel secure in his position at the box factory. Each day his confidence went up a little bit. But, Mr. Sutton continually had more surprises for Francis.

Francis had just finished cleaning Mr. Sutton's car, when the car's owner surprised him, "Lovely job Francis. It sparkles like new."

Francis turned and mutely smiled.

"Francis", Mr. Sutton went on, "I notice you're having lunch by yourself in the back of Mr. French's office."

Francis nodded in the affirmative.

Mr. Sutton went on, "Mr. French likes to play cards with some of the office staff. Do you like cards?"

Francis shook his head, "Ne ... ne ... ne ... ne ... ne ... no, I ... I ... de ... de ... don't play c ... c ... c ... c ... cards."

"Do you bring a bag lunch to work every day?"

Francis nodded, "Ye ... ye ... ye ... ye ... yes."

"Well, I'm suggesting, you should join me in my office for lunch. Bring your lunch with you, and I'll have tea ready. You do drink tea, don't you?"

Francis was overtaken with fright at this suggestion. He imagined he would never be able to swallow food in Mr. Sutton's presence. He followed the habits of his mother and father, to always be in awe when in the presence of one's superiors. However, how could he refuse this invitation without offending Mr. Sutton, whom he owed his livelihood to? Meekly, Francis nodded his head up and down to indicate his acceptance to have lunch with Mr. Sutton.

Precisely at twelve, Mr. French handed Francis his brown paper lunch bag, he then left for the office with his lunch pail in hand. Francis could feel himself getting hot and flushed as he took hold of his lunch. His first inclination was to run from the building and give up his job. How could he explain that to his father? He had no

choice but to proceed to Mr. Sutton's office, hoping that, for some reason, Mr. Sutton would not be there. The office door was open and Mr. Sutton, upon seeing Francis, called out for him to come straight in.

Mr. Sutton led Francis through a door at the back of the office where there was a small glass topped bistro table in front of a spacious window overlooking the factory's well-manicured lawns and flower gardens at the front of the building.

Mr. Sutton placed two china cups and saucers on the table, along with a matching teapot, sugar bowl, and creamer. He poured tea into both cups along with cream in his own. Francis could feel his hand shake as he picked up the creamer and added cream to his cup and then gently stirred the tea.

Francis ate in silence, keeping his eyes down. He feared he would have difficulty swallowing his food so he deliberately took small bites, thoroughly chewing them, before swallowing, and then washing the food down with tea.

Mr. Sutton broke the silence, "I notice you have a slight problem with your speech."

This statement brought a rush of heat over Francis' body, but he did not acknowledge hearing anything. He started to feel so anxious, he worried he might be ill. It took all his will-power to keep his poise while silently chewing his food.

Mr. Sutton continued, "That's not a problem. We can easily remedy that. We'll make a regular chatterbox out of you in no time. I know; I had the same affliction when I was your age. Are you familiar with Demosthenes?"

Francis did not answer, he just shook his head side to side without looking up.

Mr. Sutton took this as a cue to continue, "Demosthenes was a famous Greek orator. But he didn't start out that way. He had a speech impediment, which he not only overcame, but, with perseverance, he became the most accomplished public speaker of his time."

Francis still did not acknowledge what Mr. Sutton was saying. He sat in silence looking down at his food, trying to block out the words, while making excruciating efforts to continue eating and holding back the urge to vomit.

It was only after Mr. Sutton spoke at length about his own speech impediment, and how he had used Demosthenes methods of reciting poetry while holding several marbles in his mouth, did Francis begin to relax. Deep down inside, Francis could feel a slight feeling of hope. If Mr. Sutton could do it, maybe there was a chance he might be able to speak normally, like other people.

"Francis, we know your problem is not serious. It's just a neurodevelopmental disorder. A learned habit. I know this to be a fact, since Mr. French tells me you are quite articulate whenever there is just the two of you."

Mr. Sutton re-filled the teacups, added cream to his tea, and silently sat, sipping from his cup, while Francis, not looking up, continued chewing. Mr. Sutton once more broke a long silence, "Well Francis. Would you like to give it a try? Would you like to speak normally? Better still, would you like to speak better than anyone you know?"

Francis nodded his head but Mr. Sutton was not satisfied, "I didn't hear you Francis. Shall we give it a go?"

Without looking up, Francis spoke, "Ye ... ye ... ye ... ye ... yes."

At one o'clock Francis left Mr. Sutton's office with two thin books. One about the life of Demosthenes and the other, an essay about the power of believing in one's self, by William James.

That evening, Francis placed a few marbles in his mouth and, while looking at his reflection in a mirror, slowly recited things he had previously memorised. He got into the habit of repeating this ritual every evening.

§

Each day after this, Francis ate his lunch with Mr. Sutton. And each day Francis felt more and more comfortable. In a few weeks Francis could look Mr. Sutton straight in the eye as he answered the questions put to him. Gradually they became good friends and Francis came to look forward to lunch time.

After six weeks, Francis was starting to become quite articulate. He had learned to speak slowly, thinking over each word and saying it in his head, before verbalising it. Mr. Sutton continually brought up new ideas. Things Francis had never heard of, such as philosophy, anthropology, biology, psychology and religion. However, Mr. Sutton stated it was useless to just talk about religion as theology, one must delve into the history of religions, and try to figure out why we have religion, and why we have so many religions.

Mr. Sutton asked, "Do you ever speak to your parents about what we talk about?"

Francis hesitated before answering, "No, no I don't."

"And why is that, Francis?"

"I don't think they would understand. It ... it would be foreign to them. It ... it was to me, until you brought it up. I ... I never knew there were so many interesting ideas, until ... until now."

"Do you think your parents would be interested in these new ideas?"

Hesitatingly, Francis answered, "I ... I don't think so. Wha ... what I mean, is, they don't seem to want to question, to question anything."

"You mean they don't have any desire to think?"

Francis felt extremely embarrassed. He felt himself flush but he did not answer the question.

Mr. Sutton continued, "Your parents are normal. It is normal for the common person on the street to not think. In fact most people aren't ever aware they have any ability to think. They have never been told they have. Until just recently, were you aware you had the ability to think? Or, were you just aimlessly wandering through life, a ship without a rudder, a piece of driftwood bobbing about as the wind and currents set its course?"

"You're ... you're right Mr. Sutton. I ... I had no idea, about where ... about where, I was going. Now I can see ... various paths. But, I ... I still don't know ... which direction ... which direction I'm going."

"Well Francis, you are taking the first step. People who are leaders and rulers are fully aware common folks do not think; and they take full advantage of this fact.

Because people don't think, they are easily manipulated, mostly by emotion. You see Francis, most people are ignorant of this fact. And because they are ignorant, they act stupidly; they ARE stupid. And because they are stupid, they do not seek knowledge. And because they do not seek knowledge, they will, forever, remain ignorant. And because they remain ignorant, they remain stupid. It's a vicious circle, you see, a vicious circle."

"Yes, Mr. Sutton."

Mr. Sutton stood up and started pacing the room. He walked to the window and stared outwards. He turned and looked at Francis, "I am going to tell you a secret, which, is, in fact, no secret."

Francis looked at Mr. Sutton quizzically but said nothing.

Mr. Sutton carried on, "Adolph Hitler, on Sundays, as a little boy in Lambach, Austria, would sit in a Catholic church listening to a service given in Latin. He would become a little bored as children are apt to do." Turning to Francis, he asked, "Have you ever been bored in Church?"

Francis hesitated. He felt like this was a trick question, just like the ones Father Lucifer used to ask him in the confessional. A question that would lead to another question, and another question, until the questions would culminate in an inquisition, with no foreseeable way for the little boy to work his way out of the quagmire.

After a long silence, Mr. Sutton seemed to grow impatient with the reticent boy. He resumed his lecture, "When young Adolph grew bored, he got into the habit of

staring at a symbol above the priest's head. By concentrating on the symbol he kept his eyes from wandering away from the front of The Church, and anyone around him would assume he was concentrating on the mass; but he wasn't; he was concentrating on that symbol, which was a Swastika carved into the ornamented wood above the priest. That symbol soon became indelibly etched into the little boy's brain. Long before Hitler had joined The National Socialist German Workers Party, this party, known as the Nazi Party, had already started using the Swastika as their emblem. Hitler, knowing the significance of this emblem, was happy to embrace it, allowing everyone to assume he was the one who had brought the Swastika into the party. The Hakenkreuz, as it is known in German; Crooked Cross in English, was easily adopted by Hitler, along with an eagle, which was a symbol used by the Roman Caesars, the forerunners of the modern day Popes, who had also adopted an eagle as one of their symbols."

Mr. Sutton turned to Francis, "Am I losing you with my long monologue?"

"No, Mr. Sutton." Francis was growing more nervous. Just the mention of the Catholic Church disconcerted him. He thought of the confessional, and the suffering he had endured in that little cubicle. And he thought of Sister Geraldine, his nemesis. He felt as if Mr. Sutton was forcing him into a trap.

Mr. Sutton continued, "Hitler was quick to adopt the Hakenkreuz, since he was well aware of its meaning. This symbol is a vicious circle, a metaphor for the common proletariat. A vicious circle is used to depict the class of citizen who, because they are ignorant and stupid, are easy to control. Why a vicious circle? Because, if one is ignorant, one is stupid, and, because one is stupid, one will not look for the truth. And because one does not seek truth, they will forever be

ignorant, and because they are ignorant, they will always be stupid. It goes on and on into infinity. It is an endless vicious circle; their life is."

Francis became quite confused, but he said nothing. He looked at the clock above Mr. Sutton's head. It was one minute to one. Francis jumped up, cleaned up his mess and ran back to his jobsite, leaving Mr. Sutton wondering if he had made a mistake in his efforts to help Francis. In a soft voice, Mr. Sutton murmured to himself, 'Maybe I'm alienating him.'

§

MAY 1964

Francis had been working at the box factory for almost a year. He had grown accustomed to having lunch with Mr. Sutton, who was now well established as Francis' mentor. Mr. Sutton had recommended to Francis he should continue his education. Besides giving Francis books, and recommending others, Mr. Sutton had convinced Francis to complete his high school by taking courses in the evenings. For the most part, Francis' classmates were older students who, like Francis, had decided education is necessary. Francis, attending classes with these more mature classmates, came to enjoy school, and he learned the joy that one finds in learning. In particular, Francis enjoyed his daily talks with Mr. Sutton. He felt he learned much more from Mr. Sutton than he ever did at school.

One Saturday, after lunch, Francis went outside to the front of his house, to do some yard work. He was surprised to see Mr. Sutton's automobile parked on the front street. It had not been there when he had returned home from work for lunch. He was certain it was Mr. Sutton's car, since it was a very unique car, a beige Packard. It was highly unlikely there was another car like it in Winnipeg. Francis' immediate thought was, Mr. Sutton had come to his house to see him. However, going into the house, Francis found his mother puttering in the kitchen by herself, and his father was alone, reading in the living room. Where was Mr. Sutton?

Francis decided to check the car's license number, but he did not wish to look suspicious. He was in the habit of going into Mr. Kapusta's yard to see him, or to borrow something from his shed. Mr. Kapusta had given Francis permission to use his tools, and the shed was never locked. Francis decided, as a ruse, in order to

have a look at the plate number, he would cross the street and go to Mr. Kapusta's back shed. As he passed the car, he verified, it was indeed Mr. Sutton's car. As Francis passed Mr. Kapusta's open kitchen window, he could hear voices. Francis stopped to listen and immediately recognised Mr. Sutton's voice, "Now Matt. I won't insist, but I would consider it a nice gesture if you conceded to do as I ask. Will you not think about it? Sleep on it, and let me know tomorrow."

Francis was astonished to hear Mr. Kapusta answer in perfect English, "Cy, we've been friends for a long time, and I'm quite willing to make accommodations. However, I see no reason why I should concede to do something I'm not fully in agreement with. I am content with my life as it is; I have no desire to make any changes. I'm adamant about this, and it's no use, I could sleep on this a dozen nights, and it would still make no difference."

"Matt, could you do me one favour? Talk to Hazel before you make your final decision."

As he said this, Mr. Sutton stood up while pushing his chair back, which made a scraping sound on the linoleum. Startled, Francis proceeded to the shed, where he fetched a garden trowel. On his return trip, while Francis was passing the back door, Mr. Sutton exited, almost knocking Francis over when he pushed the door open.

"Why Francis, you gave me a shock."

"I was just getting a trowel. I live across the street, and I borrow things from Mr. Kapusta. He said I could."

Mr. Kapusta, stepping out from behind Mr. Sutton, looked surprised, but quickly caught himself, "Sure Francis, take what you need."

Mr. Sutton turned away, "We'll see you on Monday Francis."

§

Monday at lunch, Francis knew he had to find out why Mr. Kapusta had been speaking proper English with Mr. Sutton. Cautiously, he asked his boss, "I overheard Mr. Kapusta speaking to you. I didn't mean to eavesdrop. I was just walking by the kitchen window."

"What did you hear Francis?"

"Nothing of importance; but I couldn't help notice Mr. Kapusta was not speaking with his usual Ukrainian accent. It seemed very odd to me."

For some reason, Mr. Sutton seemed relieved, "Is that all Francis? Yes, Matt Kapusta is able to speak proper English whenever he wishes to. His Ukrainian accent is a façade."

"A façade?"

"Oh, yes. A façade, a ruse, Mr. Kapusta has many façades."

Francis seemed extremely puzzled, "I don't understand. Is he being two-faced?"

Mr. Sutton laughed, "I don't know how to explain this to you Francis. Mr. Kapusta is no different from anyone else. Everybody puts on faces. It's just that Mr. Kapusta

does it purposely. Most people do it sub-consciously, and nobody notices, not even themselves, in most cases. You do the same thing Francis."

"Me?"

"Yes you ... Francis."

Seeing the perplexed look on Francis' face, Mr. Sutton continued, "I suggest you observe someone close to you. For example, have a close watch on your parents. I want you to carefully discern how they speak to various people. Does your mother's voice rise in pitch as she is speaking to a child, a baby? How does her voice change when she speaks with someone who is in a position of authority, a bank manager, a lawyer, a priest, or a doctor? Does she speak in a lower pitch? Does she use different words? I have noticed some people's voice will go up and down an octave, even two octaves, while speaking to different people. Give it a try. You'll be surprised that you never noticed this phenomenon before."

Francis didn't say anything, but the wheels were whirling around in his head.

The next day Mr. Sutton gave Francis a book, "I suggest you read this book, *Leaven of Malice*, written by a Canadian, William Robertson Davies, who teaches at the University of Toronto along with Northrop Frye. I am certain the two collaborate with each other, you can definitely see Frye's influence in Davies' writings."

"Why do you want me to read this book?"

"Yesterday, we were talking about façades and I think Davies gives a very good example of how people put up a front in order to give a certain impression. I'll read you bit of it, *Mathew Snelgrove presented, in himself, one of those interesting and*

not infrequent cases in which Nature imitates Art. In the nineteenth century it appears that many lawyers were dry and fusty men, of formal manner and formal dress, who carried much of the deportment of the courtroom into private life. Novelists and playwrights, observing this fact, put many such lawyers into their books and upon the stage. Do you see what I'm getting at Francis? Now Davies continues with, *And, Mathew Snelgrove, whose professional and personal character was being formed about the turn of the century, seized upon this lawyer-like shell eagerly, and made it his own.* Davies is describing how this Snelgrove adopted a façade to match what he thought a lawyer of his standing should look like, act like, and speak like. Everyone does it Francis, some to a greater degree than others."

"Do you think I do this, Mr. Sutton?"

"Certainly you do Francis, we all do, and most of it is sub-conscious. We just pick up traits around us. Of course, it is best to do this consciously, to emanate people we respect. Unfortunately, most people pick up traits from those they are afraid of because they see these people have power and they wish to also have power, consciously or sub-consciously."

"So, what you're saying is, we are all two-faced?"

"I don't like putting it that way, but that about sums it up. My advice to you Francis is to think about everything you want to adopt. Think about how you want the world to see you."

"I'll try to."

"Now, Francis, I want to speak to you a little more about this book, It is the second novel in a trilogy but it may be read separately, even though all three books are connected. I suggest, when you read it, keep in mind that Davies is well-read and has a lot of experience in life. You need to read between the lines when you read him so that you can understand any insinuations. Most readers, because they will not research, do not understand how truthful Davies is. Most readers will assume all characters in this book are fictional, however, for example, Davies mentions Charles Heavysege. I'll read you a bit describing this author of a play which one of the main characters in this book was studying, *This was it, the principal work of Canada's earliest, and in the opinion of many people, greatest dramatist, Charles Heavysege. Had not Longfellow, moved by we know not what impulse, declared that Heavysege was the greatest dramatist since Shakespeare?* Any reader who is curious enough to do a bit of research will soon discover, Charles Heavysege was indeed a prominent, but little known, Canadian writer. This is why I am telling you Francis, do not take anything at face value and check what's under the façade. Remember, the Mae West you see in the movies is not the Mae West behind closed doors. She puts on a very good persona, and we all do, Francis."

§

It wasn't until the next Saturday, when Francis got a chance to see Mr. Kapusta, who called from across the street, "Francis, you come, give me hand in garden."

Mr. Kapusta wanted Francis to help him move his heavy stone birdbath, which consisted of a pedestal and a concave top, all made of red granite. As Mr. Kapusta took hold of the upper section, he instructed Francis, "You grab udder end Francis."

Put by shed."

Mr. Kapusta had countersunk a matching granite flat stone on his back lawn. The pair now placed the pedestal onto the flat stone, and then the bowl onto the pedestal. They then stepped back and admired their work.

Mr. Kapusta asserted, "Better here under tree. Only have sun for little while. Better for bird." As he walked to the patio, Mr. Kapusta continued, "Come Francis, sit, rest little bit."

The two sat in silence for a while before Francis spoke, "I have a confession."

"What dis confession?"

"I accidently overheard you and Mr. Sutton speaking last week-end."

"So, what you hear?"

"I heard you speaking perfect English."

Mr. Kapusta went to speak, hesitated, and then commenced laughing, "So, you know my little game?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Nothing to be afraid about. Okay Francis, I'm caught red-handed. I speak English a lot better than I let on. As for perfect English, I don't know about that. But, I was educated in England, and Canada, and, yes, I know proper English."

After a few minutes of silence, Mr. Kapusta carried on, "Life is easier for me if people think I'm a dumb bunyak."

"Why is that?"

"I work at Weston Shops. I'm a labourer, a job for an uneducated person. Not a job for someone who has studied at universities. I like my job, and I wish to keep it. If people knew how educated I am, and how many languages I speak, they would question me working as a labourer, and give me a hard time. This would be because I would no longer be one of them."

"Do you think so?"

"Every day I walk to and from work. It's only a few miles, and I enjoy the walk. When I walk, I can think more clearly, and I have lots of time, so I don't have to rush. On my way home one day, I spied a fellow workmate walking along Selkirk Avenue. He got into the driver's side of a nice shiny Oldsmobile. I confronted him, asking why he doesn't park at the shops. There's a big lot there for employees who have cars. He admitted he was concerned that some of our fellow workers might be envious of his car, and give him a hard time. 'It's easier this way', he simply stated. And it is easier. What people don't know, won't hurt them."

"It seems that there is a lot of falseness with people."

"Francis, I'm going to give you a book, *The True Believer*, written by a man who never spent a single day in school but nevertheless is a professor at a university in California. The reason I'm giving this book to you is to show you how the author, Eric Hoffer, got enough education on his own by reading books to be offered a job lecturing at a university. Also, this book is an excellent example of how people have a tendency to conform to the crowd they hang out with. How people are a lot like a flock of sheep. You'll find it interesting."

§

As the weeks went by, Francis and Mr. Kapusta, who was now a lot more open, had many philosophical discussions. Between conversations with Mr. Sutton, and also with Mr. Kapusta, Francis was beginning to understand much more about life than he could have previously imagined.

On a warm sunny Sunday morning, Mr. Kapusta opened the conversation, "I notice you never attend church Francis."

Francis answered simply, "No, I don't bother."

"Why is that Francis?"

Francis threw the question back to Mr. Kapusta, "I never see you going to church."

Mr. Kapusta laughed, "Fair enough Francis. But I remember the day you had your confirmation. I remember it distinctly, Donald Mitchell was your sponsor. I work with his dad and he told me all about it."

Francis looked very awkward, staring at the ground, "Yeah, I remember that day."

"Have you never been back to church?"

"Nope, my mom would like me to go. But, she doesn't go, and my dad never goes. He's Anglican, but because my mom's Catholic, I'm Catholic."

"Francis, how can you be Catholic? You're not old enough to decide."

"What do you mean? I was baptised and confirmed in a Catholic Church."

Mr. Kapusta took on a look of authority, "Francis, did it ever occur to you that most people don't choose a religion, they inherit one."

"What do you mean?"

Mr. Kapusta shook his head, "I don't know about this world we live in. Don't they teach you in school that children don't have the experience and knowledge to make a serious decision like adopting one particular religion over another?"

"Don't people just automatically follow their parents?"

"That's what I'm trying to tell you Francis; if people just follow their parent's religion, they are not using their brain. They are no different than a monkey who adopts his parent's habits. As a human being, you must think for yourself. You must decide, you must decide what's good for YOU."

When Francis remained silent, Mr. Kapusta went on, "Why don't you be an Anglican like your father?"

"Well, my parents agreed I would be baptised like my mom, in a Catholic church. They didn't want to argue about it, and my dad is ambivalent about the whole religious thing."

"Francis, if we all followed in our parents' footsteps, there would be no evolution, no progress. We would all be still living in caves. It is because we have brains, and because we learn how to use our brains, we continually look for better ways, and that is how we progress."

"Yes, I see what you mean." Although Francis easily acquiesced, he was not entirely

convinced. He was still mulling over Mr. Kapusta's words.

Mr. Kapusta went on by asking Francis, "Have you ever read The Bible?"

Looking up Francis answered, "We used to read it in school each morning."

"Do you agree with everything in The Bible?"

Francis hesitated but finally admitted, "No, not really. I don't agree with everything."

Mr. Kapusta questioned, "And, what don't you agree with?"

"Well, for one thing, I don't think God, if he is a good father like he's supposed to be, would be so mean and play such nasty games."

"What kind of games Francis?"

"Well, you know, like telling Abraham to kill his son and then, at the last moment, telling him it was just a joke, and he never meant it. That's a very nasty game. I wouldn't want it done to me."

"Anything else?"

"Sure! There's lots more, but the sisters at catechism told us it's a sin to even question anything God does or says. We'd all go to Hell if we did. Look at Job and the way God treated him, taking away everything and killing his children. This was supposed to test Job's faith, but if God knows everything, if he's omniscient, he would already know if Job would keep his faith or not, when God did all those bad things to him. It's all very stupid, if you ask me. And another thing that bothers me, Satan has a lot of power, isn't he actually a god then? And if he is a god then

where's this idea that there is only one god. I don't believe a word of it. I haven't since I was eight years old."

Mr. Kapusta became even more serious, "Francis, you're not normal."

"What do you mean?" Francis was obviously taken aback.

"Francis, you think, and most people do not think, and that is why they aren't going anywhere. As Socrates stated, they are petrified. Their brains have turned to stone."

Mr. Kapusta hesitated, watching the expression on Francis' face. He wondered if Francis was computing everything he was saying. He decided to find out, "Francis, be honest with me. Do you believe you would go to Hell if you lost faith?"

"No. I don't believe any of it."

"Then you are not a Catholic."

"But Mr. Kapusta, doesn't The Church tell you, if you have been baptised, you are a Catholic forever, and nothing can change that?"

Mr. Kapusta started to laugh, "Yes Francis, The Church tells people that. But they always want things both ways, and they speak out of both sides of their mouth. If it is true, because one is baptised, they will forever be Catholic, how then is The Church able to excommunicate someone?"

"I don't know."

"That is what I'm trying to tell you Francis. You are no more a Catholic than that

dog across the street is."

After several minutes of silence, Mr. Kapusta finished the conversation, "However, Francis, if you decide to be a Catholic, it would be your choice. But, make certain it is an informed choice. And, in my opinion, nobody under thirty should make such a choice. Ancient peoples believed one did not reach adulthood until age thirty; and I agree."

After this conversation, Francis lost what little guilt he had left about not pleasing his mother when he failed to go to church on Sundays. And he no longer deliberated why his mother should be so insistent on his going to church when she, herself, never did.



JULY 1975

Francis was at the Simpson's house helping Margaret with her mother's perennial garden. She was impressed about how much Francis knew about plants.

"Everything I know I attribute to Mr. Kapusta. He's been helping me in the yard for years."

"You're close to Mr. Kapusta, aren't you?"

"Oh, yes. Between him and Mr. Sutton I have been learning a lot, especially about life."

"Was it from them you picked up all your ideas about changing your life? For instance, about giving up stuttering. You never did tell me the story."

"Well, there's not much to tell, really, I just follow what's in the books these two men have recommended. It's all very much just common sense."

"Why don't you tell me about it?"

Francis looked into Margaret's eyes and smiled, "I'm sure you're doing a lot of it already without being aware you're doing it. For example, in your personal life, you are planning things, setting goals. You want some things and you are working towards getting them. That's what it's all about."

"I don't quite understand."

"The secret of life is to not be a ship without a rudder. Most people have no goals and that's what they're like, a ship without a rudder, or a piece of driftwood on the

sea. Earl Nightingale explains it all in his recording, *The Strangest Secret*. Basically, what one thinks about is what one gets. One needs to set a goal and keep their eyes on that goal. They need to continually ask, if what they are saying and doing is taking them closer to their goal. For example, suppose I want a new car. I do my homework and decide exactly what car I want. Then I work out a plan to get my car. The problem is most people get distracted from their goal. They may save a few dollars towards their car and then spend their savings on something else, like a vacation for instance."

"Well, vacations are important too!"

"Definitely, vacations are important. But life is all about priorities. What do you want, a vacation or a car? That's what you need to ask yourself."

"Why can't I have both?"

"You can. And that is the key. However, you must decide what is most important. Once you have decided on a car you must not be sidetracked. Stick to your goal, and after buying the car, then you may think about setting a goal for a vacation. You see, that is the secret, DO NOT GET SIDETRACKED. Do you understand? Let's go back to a ship without a rudder. If I ask a captain of an ocean liner where he's going and he tells me Singapore, well, that is fine. But, if he gets halfway to Singapore and he suddenly decides he would like to go to Argentina instead, what would his passengers say? He would be fired from his job. That's what most people do, they get halfway to their goal, and then they get sidetracked."

"Yeah but things have a habit of coming up. Priorities change."

"That's the key, do not let things sidetrack you. Somehow you must stay on course. The ship may run into a storm but, in the end, it will make it to Singapore. You must do the same with your life."

"Francis, I just don't know."

"Margaret, remember when I was telling you about schizophrenia?"

"You mean with that psychiatrist, Earl something or other?"

"I was talking about Dr. Eric Bernstein, a very well-known Canadian psychiatrist. He moved to California and changed his name to Eric Berne. His books have sold in the millions. His ideas are not new, but they are revolutionary for some, since they go against the establishment."

"He's the one who wrote there is no such thing as an alcoholic?"

"That's correct."

"Well Francis, after our discussion, and after I thought about that statement, I came to agree with it, but not immediately. At first I was shocked and even incensed, but, after thinking it over, I came to realise my father was an alcoholic, but he wasn't what everyone believes an alcoholic to be. He did not have a disease. This psychiatrist you were talking about, I now have to admit, was right, my father was definitely playing a control game, with my mother, with the rest of his family, and with everyone he had anything to do with. I can see it now, it was all about control. We never knew if my father was coming straight home after work, or if he was going out for a beer with the boys. We never knew what time he was coming home. Sometimes he would have a few beers and come home after the beer

parlour closed for supper hour. Sometimes he would go for supper in a restaurant and then go back to the beer parlour. He might come home anytime, often it was after midnight and he would be drunk. Most times he would come home in a bad temper. He would wake the whole house up with his ranting and raving. We children hid under our beds as he beat up on my mother. He did this often. Sometimes he would end up having sex with my mother; we could hear him grunting and the bed springs squeaking as he was pumping away on top of her. Sometimes he would just pass out. We never knew what was going to happen, and we lived in fear. The whole household revolved around him. Sometimes, on a Sunday, he would have a hangover, but, sometimes he wouldn't drink on Saturday, and he would get up Sunday morning with a smile on his face. On those days, he would be as nice as pie, and we would all be very grateful for his kindness. He would take all of us kids out for ice-cream or a hot dog, sometimes both."

"Margaret, his game was explained by Machiavelli who stated, *'when we receive good from whence we expect evil, we feel the more indebted to our benefactor'*. Whether consciously or subconsciously, your father knew precisely how to play the game. Whenever he was good to you, you felt very grateful. Is that not right? He could play you and your family like a master playing a violin."

"You're right Francis. When I think back I realise we were all under his control. It was a horrible game of control. Dr. Berne was so right when he described how alcoholism is not a disease, it's just a game, a game of control, much the same as any other control game. And, I can now understand how paedophiles and rapists are not interested in sex; what they want is to have full control over another person. It's all a game of control. All of it, it was all control and, for us children,

there was no escape. And, even worse, my husband was no different from my father. It's like, when I got married, I was going back for more."

Francis continued, "Yes, what you are describing is so true, Dr. Berne wrote that it's all about control. All of the games he describes in his books are about control. The nasty thing is, Transactional Analysis, Dr. Berne's method of analysing people and showing people how to take control of their own lives, is not being taught to the average person on the street. However, it is being taught to insurance salesmen, used car salesmen, appliance salesmen, and to all kinds of other people working in sales."

"Salesmen? Why is it being taught to them?"

"The same reason why students going to exclusive and expensive schools who are studying to be leaders, such as politicians and corporate leaders, are taught about Machiavelli, but ordinary people on the street don't even know who Machiavelli was. It's all about exploitation and control. Dr. Berne explains how salesmen are able to develop methods to speak directly to a person's Child, if they have an understanding about how each person has a Child, an Adult and a Parent. They get the person's Child to buy insurance, or whatever product they are selling. Children think emotionally and a successful salesman knows, once the customer becomes emotional, they have lost; they are now in the salesman's control, and the salesman will get them to buy. It's as simple as that."

"It's sounds so callous."

"Of course it is. It is callous, and it is kept a secret from the average Joe on the street. Unless you attended an expensive and exclusive private school, in all

likelihood, you would never have heard of, or read about, any of these secrets. But, as Earl Nightingale and Napoleon Hill have often said, it is not a secret; there are plenty of books revealing the secret, many of them in public libraries. But if one doesn't know these books exist, how are they to find out the secret? If you are not educated in these matters, and you live your life in the Child mode, you are easily controlled. That is why our society is flooded with cheap entertainment that has no educational content. Look at the silly sitcoms and soap operas on television. It is all inane humour, shallow plots and frivolous songs. It is geared to keep the audience in their Child mode, to keep them from thinking. And when people are not thinking, they are controlled with fear, guilt, and shame; the very tools our rulers have been using to keep the common man under control, to keep people in voluntary slavery. Common uneducated people are slaves, slaves who believe and keep on believing that THEY ARE FREE."

Francis continued, "I want you to consider what's on television, try to analyse shows such as, The Grand Ole Opry, Hee Haw, Laugh-In, or any of the soap-operas, late night talk shows, and even the shows designed for children. What do you see and hear? You won't learn anything, the jokes are childish, and mostly put-downs; the songs are simple, two chord frivolities, which usually elicit indignation, nothing is discussed seriously, and the audience is never out of their Child mode. Then we have sports, which is much stupider. We have local football or hockey teams which are made up of mostly foreigners who are commonly traded between teams. These players have nothing to do with us or our city or province, however, we pretend, if they win a game, it somehow brings glory to us. Besides this, sports and competition breed bullying and cheating in our children. All of it is just cheap entertainment to amuse people and make them forget their problems and their

goals, if they ever had any. That's the key, people usually do not handle their problems, nor do they plan their lives. They are all ships without rudders and they are continuously trying to believe they are so clever because they know stupid jokes, silly songs, and baseball statistics."

"Francis, I have no argument with what you are saying. But you make it sound all so simple, you suggest it is very simple for anyone to be able to step out of their Child into their Adult?"

"That's the key, it is simple, very, very simple. This is what I was referring to when we had our conversation at the Ledge. You can now understand, it would take more than a few minutes over coffee to fully explain how things work. For one thing, you would never believe me if I just blurted out that just about everything you have learned at school is not true. Is it a conspiracy to control us? It is, but I don't think it's an organised conspiracy. We have this game because it works very effectively for anyone seeking power. And the only people who get into positions of power are the ones who understand how the game is played, who understand how to manipulate people through their emotions. They understand how the Child has no rational thought and cannot make rational decisions. The Child seeks out what feels good and avoids anything that brings pain."

Francis continued, "Once we learn how this game is played and we start making rational choices for ourselves, nobody is able to control us. If I'm trying to control you, wouldn't I want to keep my hidden agenda hidden? Wouldn't I want to keep you from stepping into your Adult mode and thinking about what I am doing? Don't you understand why, if I wanted to control you, I would try to keep you in your Child mode?"

Francis further explained, "As Napoleon Hill and Dr. Berne have stated, now that you know the secret, what are you going to do? You never again can say you didn't know, to plead ignorance. You can apologise for former mistakes, when you were not aware of the secrets of life, but you have no excuses now, now that you do know. And, now that you do know, you have no choice but to change your way of thinking and acting, and begin changing your life."

"Francis, it is difficult though. As I said, when I thought about Dr. Berne stating there is no such thing as an alcoholic, I was literally sick. I could feel myself wanting to vomit. I don't fully understand why, but I think it is because everything he writes goes against the grain. It is not what we have been taught. We have been told by society, we are supposed to feel sorry for alcoholics, because they have a disease. Dr. Berne says no, when we feel sorry for them, the alcoholics have full control over us, because we have become emotional. He says we should never give them sympathy; we should, however, let them know we are fully aware of the game they are playing. We should make it quite plain to them, we will no longer be part of their game."

Francis emphasised, "I know, it all sounds quite hard and cold, just like Nature can be hard and cold. Sinclair Ross, the Canadian author, didn't discover these games until he was past middle age. You would think, with being a psychological novelist, he would have learned sooner, but he did not. After retirement, while in Italy, he went to visit a child he had been sponsoring through Save the Children Fund. I was reading how he was shocked to learn most of the money he had sent was syphoned off by a corrupt international adoption agency. Because he was emotional about the welfare of a child, he was an easy target for scam artists. With

the use of emotion, people are controlled and scammed every single day. Charities, for the most part, are nothing but big scams playing on people's emotions. And charities, if you think about it, would be committing suicide if they ever reached their goals. Many of these charities were invented by lawyers, religious groups, and business men. Often the heads of these charities are making a good living running them, while the volunteers who do all the work are working for free. If I'm unemployed I can start a charity and end up making a very good living, if I am aware of how things work, and I go about it the right way. And, I get all the tax breaks."

Francis paused long enough for Margaret to speak, "Francis, since I've re-connected with you, my mind's been in a whirl. How about changing the subject for now?"

"Okay, that's one of my faults. I'm always too serious. What time will our mothers be back with the girls?"

"They said after supper. They will be eating at Eaton's, in The Grill Room."

"Pretty fancy dining!"

Margaret laughed, "It's good for the girls. They need to learn about the finer things in life which you and I were never exposed to at their ages."

"You're right. As I have stated many times, the next generation must be at least one rung higher on the social ladder than we are, or we have failed our duty. That is what evolution is all about. Our families must steadily move on up, one generation at a time, one rung at a time."

"Francis, I'm beginning to understand."

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SEPTEMBER 1975

Francis was shocked and extremely hurt when Margaret explained to him she no longer wanted to have him associating with her two daughters. Quite plainly, with the look she gave him, she was telling Francis he was evil, despite the fact she had no evidence to support this idea. On the contrary, all summer, Francis, as well as his mother, had treated her and her family in nothing but a friendly and charitable manner. They had all grown to be very close. And now, she was shunning Francis.

What was the cause of this rift? When Margaret had confronted him, Francis had admitted he had told her two daughters there was no Tooth-Fairy and no God. To Francis, Margaret was being unreasonable, he and Margaret had discussed how he did not believe children should be lied to, and this included religion. Also, he never denied being an atheist. It was only when he had told the children there is no Tooth-Fairy and no God, did Margaret turn vicious with him. It seemed as if Margaret, deep down inside, believed all children should grow up believing in fantasies. She had the idea that fantasies and innocence went together and she also believed, subconsciously, that children could not grow up to be moral citizens without having a belief in God.

Margaret's blood seemed to boil and she reacted violently, "How can I trust you with my children? You've been filling their heads with adult ideas and taking away their innocence. Children have the right to believe in fantasies. It's a part of childhood. It's a part of growing up."

Francis was in utter shock. He could not understand why Margaret was being so aggressively intolerant, when all along she had put across to him an attitude of

open-mindedness. He wanted to talk things over, but Margaret would not listen, "Margaret, I don't understand. How can I tell falsehoods to children? How can I tell lies to them? And, I may not believe in a god, but that doesn't make me a bad person? All the time we've been talking about religion, I never denied that I don't believe in a god."

"Speaking about being an atheist in private is one thing but now I find out you are indoctrinating my two girls into this atheist cult of yours. I want my girls to be brought up properly, with Christian morals. You have to acknowledge that atheists do bad things. Look at history. Look at Hitler and the awful things he did."

Francis became quiet, looking very pensive, he hesitated before answering, "Hitler was a Roman Catholic. But, I see what you mean. The world is secretive about God being used as an effective tool for anyone who wishes to rule people, to enslave people. I'm certain the Pope is also an atheist, just like the original Popes who learned from their advisor, Seneca, who stated, *'Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by rulers as useful.'* All rulers, all kings, all queens, all politicians, all clergy, regularly use God as a tool. The only leader in our time who admitted to being an atheist was Joseph Stalin. He did not hide the fact. Openly, he stated that religion is an opium for the peasants. Just because Russia is a communist and atheist state did not prevent Stalin from supporting the various churches, and having The Church leaders helping him rule the peasants. This, he believed, was an effective way to prevent revolutions. Stalin stated, it is easier to rule peasants who have a god than to rule them if they do not have a god. Why is this? Stalin realised, with a god, the peasants will remain uneducated and emotional, and they would never even consider trying to think

rationally. He realised, the only time people give up their god is when they become educated enough to start thinking logically and rationally. Religion can only be spread through emotion, mostly through fear. Rational and logical people would never be able to accept religion. Stalin knew, as long as the peasants remained emotional, in their Child state, they could easily be controlled through their emotions, and through their priests. And, with his military power, Stalin had full control over the priests. He knew, it is far easier to keep a few priests under control than to keep millions of peasants under control. He needed the priests to act as his overseers, and for them to keep their sheep under control. And, his priests, believe me, are atheists. To Stalin, he was the shepherd and his priests were his sheepdogs, keeping the flock under control. The sheep in the flock only see the dogs and they do not realise it's the shepherd who is giving the orders."

Francis, continued, "Russia and The Church have been playing a very effective game. Like the good cop and bad cop who come across as adversaries, but are working as a team, The Church openly condemns communism; however, what is happening in Russia is a very good example of how they work together. The Church is much like the United States in their actions. Henry Ford, Armand Hammer and other American businessmen have had good relations with Russia, even when the United States was officially an enemy of Russia. What is really going on? We do not know."

Francis did not stop, he was becoming emotional, "I feel I must bring up one fact, for thousands of years, people just as bad, and often-times worse than Hitler, have been acclaimed to be heroes. Why? It is because history tells us God was on their side. If you don't believe me, read The Bible. Wasn't Joshua just like Hitler? Did he

not murder, rape, and enslave people. Did he not confiscate goods and land? Were his atrocities not just as bad as Hitler's? Yet, many religious congregations view Joshua as a hero, they sing songs of praise to him, all this, because they want to believe that Joshua had God on his side. Why shouldn't they believe this? Doesn't The Bible tell them so? People fall for this crap. Why do they? It is fear. They are so afraid of The Church and of Hell they will accept anything. If Hitler had won the war, people would now declare, God was on his side, and he would be a hero."

Francis was on a roll. It was if, when he lost his speech impediment, he became over-lubricated at the mouth. He continued, "Another thing, let us talk about The Church which, throughout history, has butchered and conquered people, and enslaved people. The Church, throughout history, has owned slaves, has stolen lands and livelihoods from people, and has been responsible for the suffering of millions upon millions of people, including young and innocent children. Why do people kiss The Church's ass? Because, people are brainwashed to believe, God is on The Church's side. Isn't it time for people to open their eyes and see how they have been fooled? Hitler was no worse than any Pope, including our present day Pope."

Francis briefly paused before he went into another tirade, "Hitler learned a strategy from Pope Innocent the Third, who, like popes before him, ignored existing treaties and sent his "Holy Crusaders" into what is now Southern France, in order to "rid this area of infidels". These "Holy Crusaders" marched from city to city, exterminating every person in sight, resulting in millions of people; men, women and children being slaughtered. Nobody was spared, cities, after being thoroughly looted, were burned, incinerating millions of victims as the years

progressed. The Pope's scheme was to seize lands, purge them of all inhabitants, burn the cities, and then colonise the land with uneducated, ignorant, peasants, who were too meek and powerless to question Papal authority. Can you tell me Hitler was any more evil than this pope?"

"Francis, you're only trying to confuse me. Hitler was an atheist. I can't believe that any person who actually believed in God could ever be like him."

Margaret burst into tears and Francis could see it was of no use continuing this conversation. He realised there was no sense in arguing. As he turned and walked to the street, where his car was parked, he blurted out, "Okay, have it your own way."

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This confrontation had begun quite innocently. Olivia and Alice had come over to visit Mrs. Humphrey on a Saturday morning when Francis was not there. Mrs. Humphrey, with help from the girls, had lunch ready when Francis came home just after twelve o'clock. During lunch, as usual, everyone was talkative, with the girls telling Mrs. Humphrey and Francis about what happened over the past week.

Alice had just started grade one and she was now feeling quite grown up. She explained how Miss Pierce had to continuously discipline some of the boys who were always being disruptive. "How am I able to concentrate on my work when these boys are always being so noisy? I can't think, especially when I'm trying to do my additions."

Olivia piped up, "You should have no trouble with your arithmetic. I've already taught you everything I know, including multiplying, so you should be able to do grade one work with no trouble."

"Well, I can't think with all the noise they make."

It was at this point, Mrs. Humphrey asked Francis if she could leave the cleaning up with him and the girls, as she had to run down the street with some chicken soup for Mrs. Abbot who was not feeling well. Mrs. Abbot was a widow in her eighties who lived by herself, her children having all moved away. Mrs. Humphrey believed it was her duty to give a helping hand to anyone in need.

"I'll just be a minute Francis. How would it be if you and the girls start cleaning up the kitchen? I'll be right back."

Francis was well aware of what Mrs. Humphrey's '*just a minute*' meant. It usually turned into a few hours, since Mrs. Abbot, having no family and friends close by, was lonely and made it quite clear that she required attention.

"That's fine mother. I'm sure we can handle things here. Don't worry about a thing."

As Francis washed and the girls dried, the conversation continued.

Alice piped up, "I've got a loose tooth."

Francis bent over to have a look, "Mind if I touch it?"

Alice opened her mouth and pinched her loose tooth between her thumb and one finger, moving it slightly back and forth.

"Oh yes, I can see it is getting a bit loose. I would say it'll be at least a week before it comes out."

Removing her fingers from her mouth, Alice smiled, "When it comes out I'm putting it under my pillow and the Tooth-Fairy is gonna give me a dime."

Francis smiled, "That's nice."

Alice inquired, "Did your teeth fall out when you were my age?"

Francis answered, "Yes, as I remember, they fell out and I got my adult teeth."

"Did the Tooth-Fairy give you a dime for your teeth?"

"If I remember correctly, I would find a nickel under my pillow the next morning."

"Only a nickel, I'm getting a dime. Did you have a different Tooth-Fairy?"

Behind Alice, Olivia was nodding her head up and down and Francis hesitated before answering, "Well, actually, it was my dad who left the nickel. I didn't have a Tooth-Fairy."

"You didn't have a Tooth-Fairy? Didn't they have them in the olden days?"

If there was one thing which bothered Francis, it was telling a lie. He felt very uncomfortable continuing with this charade and he didn't know how to proceed, but he tried, "Well there were no Tooth-Fairies in my house."

"Why not? We have one and she would leave a dime for Olivia when she lost a tooth, and my mom says she got money from her Tooth-Fairy. Why didn't you have one?"

He felt cowardly afterwards, but without thinking, Francis, possibly out of habit, threw the question to Olivia, "Did the Tooth-Fairy really leave you money, Olivia?"

Alice turned and looked at her sister for an answer. Olivia stood with a gaping mouth, obviously dumbstruck.

Francis broke the silence, "I'm sorry Olivia. I didn't mean to put you on the spot. Why don't we change the subject?"

Alice was not satisfied. She wanted an answer, "Is the Tooth-Fairy just like Santa Claus, not real?"

What a tangled web we weave when we first learn to deceive. That was the thought going through Francis' head. Why do people play such games with children? Does it give them a feeling of power? Francis could not analyse it in the short time he had while he was standing and watching the girls' expressions. He looked at Olivia, "I think you should answer your sister. As best you can."

There were tears in Olivia's eyes as she choked the answer out, "No, there is no Tooth-Fairy. It's all a lie. Mom's the Tooth-Fairy."

Alice was obviously dumbfounded, "Why did everyone lie to me? You're just picking on me and making me feel stupid because I'm younger."

Olivia tried to put salve on the wound, "Everyone gets lied to. I only found out about the Tooth-Fairy when I was eight."

This comment did not help. The tears were flowing down Alice's cheeks. Francis reached over, pulled a Kleenex from a box on the counter, and handed it to Alice.

Later, when everyone had calmed down, Alice stated it was a sin to lie, and both her mom and Olivia had committed a sin, so they would now go to Hell.

Olivia defended herself, "Sister Geraldine said it was okay to tell a lie, if it's a white lie, and the Tooth-Fairy is a white lie." Olivia looked at Francis, "Isn't that right Francis?"

Francis was now put on the spot. He could see no way of getting out of this situation without being dishonest. He decided to be truthful, "A lie is a lie. We cannot justify any lie. It's only playing games."

"You mean Sister Geraldine told us a lie? You mean, even if we told a white lie, we would go to Hell? You mean I'm going to go to Hell cause I told Alice there's a Tooth-Fairy?"

Francis, seeing Olivia's distress and knowing no other way to calm her fears blurted out, "Olivia, you are not going to Hell. There is no such thing as Hell and there is no such thing as a sin. It's all just a game; a silly, silly, game, not much different than Santa Claus or the Tooth-Fairy."

Both girls, bewildered, sat silently looking at Francis, and Francis did not know what to say or do. How did he get himself into such a fine mess?

Finally Olivia spoke, "What about God? God says there are sins."

Francis felt himself being pulled deeper and deeper into a quagmire. He could simply tell them to talk to their mother. However, he did not do this. He came right out and stated what he truly believed, "There is no God. It's all a lie. A lie no different from the Easter Bunny, the Tooth-Fairy, or Santa Claus, it's all a lie."

After several minutes of silence, Olivia asked, "Is THAT all?"

Francis looked perplexed and Olivia explained, "I mean is there anything else you adults are lying about?"

"No, I can't think of anything at the moment. I'll let you know if I do."

Francis walked Olivia and Alice home in silence. Alice was still upset about losing her Tooth-Fairy whom she had fantasised to be much the same as the good witch in *The Wizard of Oz* movie. She had been planning to stay awake the whole night after she placed her tooth under her pillow, so she could see her Tooth-Fairy.

Olivia was still wondering, besides the Tooth-Fairy, the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, and now God, what else did adults lie about.

When the threesome got to the Simpson house, Susan, a fairly new playmate who had just recently moved onto Dalton Street with her family, was waiting for them. As the girls approached, Susan simply said, "Hi!"

Olivia answered, "Hi Susan."

Susan asked, "You wanna play dolls. I've got my Emma."

Each girl answered perfunctorily, "I guess so."

After Francis had left, Susan, noticing how forlorn the girls looked, asked, "Is something wrong?"

Alice answered, "Francis told me about the Tooth-Fairy."

"About the Tooth-Fairy?" Susan seemed puzzled.

Olivia explained, "Alice's tooth is loose and she was gonna put it under her pillow. Now Francis told her there is no Tooth-Fairy."

Susan blurted out, "Is that all?"

Alice answered, "Well that's enough, isn't it?"

Susan stated, "I know there is no Tooth-Fairy. So what's the big deal? I always knew that."

Olivia answered for her sister, "Alice kind of grew attached to her Tooth-Fairy."

Susan was not very sympathetic, "I guess she had to find out sometime."

Olivia went on, "Not only that, but he told us a lie after he said we should not tell lies."

Susan questioned, "What did he tell you?"

"He told us there's no God, and everyone knows there is."

Susan looked baffled, "I don't think that's a lie."

Both girls stared at Susan before Olivia asked, "You don't?"

"No, my family doesn't have a god, and I've known that all my life."

Now Olivia came across as being angry, "Why didn't you tell us?"

"Because my dad told me not too. He said it was our business and nobody else's, and he said everyone is entitled to believe what they want to. If other people wanted to have a god, a Santa Claus, or an Easter Bunny, he said it was their

business, and didn't concern us."

Olivia had to ask, "Did you ever believe in Santa Claus?"

"No."

Olivia blurted out, "No? How come? Didn't your parents put presents under the tree and pretend it was Santa Claus?"

Susan wasn't embarrassed or hesitant as she answered truthfully, "My dad buys a Christmas tree, and we get Christmas presents, but, I always knew the presents were from my parents, and there is no Santa Claus."

This was turning out to be a shocking day for Olivia and Alice. It was as if their world was being swirled upside down. For their whole life, they had thought everyone in the world was just like them, and now they were finding out they were not. Olivia, once again, wondered what other revelations would come to her and her sister.

That afternoon Olivia told her mother she no longer wanted to go to catechism. When her mother asked why, Olivia told her, "I found out. Alice and I have found out. Francis told us, it's a lie, it's all a lie, and there is no God."

Margaret reacted violently. "What? What else did he tell you?"

Alice hid behind her older sister. They had never seen their mother so upset. As Margaret raised a clenched fist above their heads, both girls feared their mother may strike them at any moment, despite her never having done so in the past. They were frantically afraid, nearly terrified.

Margaret also was afraid, afraid she may do something she would be sorry for. Trying to hold her composure, she began asking about what had transpired with Francis and the whole truth came out. Margaret grabbed a light jacket and literally ran to the Humphrey's house where she confronted Francis.

"What can I say Margaret. The girls asked me, and I cannot tell a lie. I told them the truth."

"You should have told them to ask me. You had no right to say that to them. No right at all. You are shameful. What gives you the right to tell them there's no Tooth-Fairy and no God?"

"What was I to do, continue with this charade? I want no part of it. I don't believe in telling fibs to children."

"You never told me you would discuss these things with my girls. As their mother, that's my job to tell them about Tooth-Fairies, religion and morals, including God. Now it's left up to me to straighten my girls out. To undo the damage you've done. You've taken away their innocence. They will never be the same."

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Francis, Margaret, and the two girls, had planned on going for a ride to Lockport to have a picnic the next morning. Francis was exasperated and disappointed; but not as disappointed as Olivia and Alice were when Margaret broke the news to them that the picnic was cancelled.

As Margaret was trying to explain why they were not going for a picnic, the girls

kept on questioning why, and, in exasperation, Margaret blurted out they would no longer be seeing Francis, as he, she just found out, was not a nice person.

With tears rolling down her cheeks, Alice begged her mother to explain herself, "Why Ma, what's the matter with Francis? We always have so much fun together, and he teaches us all kinds of things?"

Margaret tried to explain, "That's the problem, I'm afraid he's teaching you too much, he's teaching you bad things. Things I don't agree with."

Olivia joined in, "Like what Ma?"

Margaret searched for words before finally belting out, "For one thing, what you said is true, he doesn't believe in God!"

"Is that all?" Olivia was clearly perplexed as she continued, "Susan doesn't believe in God. And she's not bad. You said so yourself."

"Susan? You mean Susan Lee?"

"Yes, Susan Lee. She doesn't believe in God."

Margaret started to grow angrier, "Olivia, don't you lie to me. The Lee family are Buddhists. I know that for a fact. Mrs. Lee told me she and her family regularly attend the Buddhist Church."

"Susan told me they don't have a god."

"Of course they have a god. I don't want to hear any more of this nonsense. Go to your room, and stay there."

When Olivia failed to move, Margaret's face started to glow red, "You hear me. Get, get to your room ... NOW!"

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Life was tense in the Simpson household over the next few days. It was fortunate the girls were in school and Margaret was away at work most of the day. On Saturday, Susan came over to play with the two girls. Margaret, when she saw Susan, decided to prove to her girls how wrong they were. She would make Susan admit she told a lie. She came right out and confronted the young visitor by asking if she believed in God.

Susan, to Margaret's surprise, wasn't the least bit shy. She, without hesitation, answered, "We don't have a god."

"You and your family are Buddhists. Are you telling me you don't believe in God?"

Again, Susan was not the least bit timid or embarrassed. She, in a very easy manner, simply stated, "Some Buddhists have a god, but we don't. The Buddha clearly states, one should not seek help from a god."

Margaret was perplexed and bewildered. Her immediate impulse was to ask Susan to leave the house. However, after remembering the stress and unhappiness when she removed Francis from her two girls' lives, she hesitated. She looked at the three children. They got along so well together, and, truth be told, Margaret liked Susan. She believed Susan was a good influence on her two daughters, and the three of them were becoming just like sisters. Not being able to decide what to do,

she turned and walked away, leaving the three girls to play with their dolls.

The following day, Margaret replayed the events of the previous day over and over in her mind before making a decision. She would get to the bottom of this; she would speak with Mrs. Lee. Right after supper, she phoned the Lee house, Mr. Lee answered. He told Margaret that Mrs. Lee wouldn't be home all evening and he asked if he could be of help. Margaret, believing this matter to be urgent and wanting to get to the bottom of it as soon as possible, asked if she could come over to discuss something with him.

Mr. Lee, in a perplexed manner, inquired, "What is this all about Mrs. MacDonald? Has Susan done something wrong?"

"No, it's not that. But, I would feel more comfortable speaking to you in person."

"Fine, I'll be home."

"Seven o'clock then? Would that be alright?"

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Silently, Margaret had rehearsed her speech several times. She approached the front door confidently, but as Mr. Lee led her into the living room, her mind went blank. She didn't know how to start. She would have been more comfortable speaking to Mrs. Lee.

After a few minutes of silence, Mr. Lee asked, "What seems to be the problem Mrs. MacDonald? Has Susan done something she shouldn't have?"

"No, no, Susan has done nothing; it's just that ... well ... well ... for some reason ... well, Susan has got it into her head, for some reason, that God doesn't exist, that's all."

Mr. Lee was obviously perplexed, "I don't understand. Is that all?"

"Well, yes, and my daughters are learning something different in catechism."

"Yes, that is the beautiful thing about living in a free and democratic country like Canada, we all are allowed to have our beliefs, and we respect everyone's right to do so."

Now it was Margaret's turn to show perplexity, "You, you mean, you don't believe in God?"

"No, any true Buddhist has no belief in any god. Did you not know that?"

"No, no, I didn't. Well I just assumed. I mean, you seem like such nice people. And Susan is such a lovely girl. Well, I just assumed you would be God-fearing people."

"A person doesn't need to fear a god to be a good citizen. I don't think you know very much about Buddhism. Would you like me to tell you a little bit about it?"

"Well ... I really don't understand. For instance, I have known, I mean I have a friend, Mr. Alvin Smith, who goes to your Church. He used to belong to Holy Trinity Anglican Church, and I know, for a fact; I know for a fact, he believes in God ... and also in Jesus Christ. Are you telling me he has now declared that he is an atheist?"

Mr. Lee took a deep breath and exhaled. Knowing how emotional people will commonly become when their religious beliefs come under scrutiny, he was not

sure how to continue; but he tried, "Because you belong to the Roman Catholic faith, I realise you are discouraged from studying about other religions. You, therefore, would know little about Buddhism."

Margaret shuffled in her seat but said nothing.

Mr. Lee also shuffled in his seat, unsure about how to continue. Finally he asked, "Would you like tea? I made some just before you arrived."

Starting to get up, Margaret stated, "No, I have to go."

"That is a shame. I would like to explain, but, it would take much longer than a few minutes for me to tell you what you should know."

Margaret hesitated. A picture of Francis laughing and joking with her two daughters flashed through her mind. If only Francis could be like everyone else. Why couldn't he just accept things? She remembered him speaking in the gallery. She had been so shocked how good looking he had become. She had lied. She really didn't need to leave. She could spend the whole evening with Mr. Lee, and she felt exhausted. Sitting back down, she consented, "Alright, I'll have tea."

"Do you take anything in it?"

"Just cream thank-you."

The two sat facing each other, sipping their tea for a few minutes, before Mr. Lee broke the silence, "Buddhists are not dogmatic as some other systems of belief are. And there are many different Buddhist congregations, the same as Christianity. And like Christianity not all congregations follow the same practices,

and have the same dogma. For example, you as a Roman Catholic, must confess your sins and do penance before you are allowed the Holy Sacrament. Am I correct?"

Margaret nodded her head, "That is correct."

"Buddhists acknowledge that things change, and therefore their religion must be flexible. For example, the Catholic Church has moved away from Latin masses. Latin masses were a mainstay of The Church for hundreds of years, and now they have been discontinued."

"I believe so. I mean, that's what I've been told. I haven't been to church for a while."

"Are you no longer a Catholic?"

"Oh, yes, I'm a Catholic. My children are Catholics."

"How can your children be Catholics? They are not adults who are able, legally, to make up their own minds about such matters."

"They were baptised and confirmed."

"To be baptised as a child is like a calf being branded by a rancher. The brand is there for life. Is that not so?"

Margaret was visibly agitated, "Well, I don't like to put it that way."

Seeing Margaret's uneasiness, Mr. Lee changed the direction of his explanation,

"Can you understand that Buddhism has no dogmas, it is a path of learning? Each

person follows their own path, and hopefully we will all meet at a certain point. The Buddha's teachings were just that. They were not commandments which every Buddhist must follow. They are guidelines, suggestions, if you will. The Buddha suggested one would not find the path to happiness and contentment through any god. They must look within themselves. Each person has a spark of something divine in them. Each person grows and evolves through learning and reflection. But to have someone, or something, point out a pathway for you, is not in the Buddha's teachings. In short, if someone professes a belief in a god, it is of no consequence. They are not condemned or criticised. They sit in on discussions, and take part in religious activities, as everyone else does. Whether they keep their faith in a god, or lose it, is only of concern to themselves."

Margaret became less defensive. She seemed more open as she asked, "What exactly did the Buddha say about our God, our Jesus?"

"First of all, the Buddha may or may not have been a living person. He may have been invented to fill a need. The teachings of our Buddha are as old as the hills. There were many men, for thousands of years before our Buddha, who taught the same lessons. Our Buddha was just passing along knowledge which he had probably obtained through his education. Our Buddha, our enlightened one, lived many years before Jesus did, if Jesus was indeed a living person. The Buddha taught that religious ideas, and especially the god idea, have their origins in fear."

"What do you mean, if Jesus indeed lived?"

Mr. Lee could clearly see Margaret was moving back to being defensive. He thought he could read her mind, and he believed she was thinking, despite the fact

she no longer was attending church, *'How dare he question the existence of my Jesus'*. Mr. Lee did not wish to argue with her. He knew it would do no good, but he started on a course, and now he felt he must continue, "Modern scholars have shown, by reading ancient writings, the stories in The Bible about Jesus, were, in all probability, plagiarised from ancient mythology. Other than in The Bible, there is no historical evidence that Jesus Christ ever existed."

"Everyone knows Jesus existed. Millions, billions of people know that."

Without thinking, Mr. Lee blurted out, "Every child in the Christian world who is under five knows that Santa Claus exists."

Margaret jumped up, "I've heard enough. Goodnight Mr. Lee." She almost ran to the door, and without any further adieux, she left. What made her so angry? She couldn't figure it out.

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That night Margaret could not sleep. She had a continuous nightmare. She was stuck in Purgatory looking down at throngs of people burning in Hell. The Devil, with his foot on her back, was pushing her into the abyss. Several times she woke up in a cold sweat. Towards morning, she remembered a time when she had the same sweaty feelings of uncertainty and damnation. It was the last time she could remember being in the confessional. At catechism, the children were told, over and over again, if one thinks bad thoughts, it is just as bad as actually doing them, and one must confess all bad thoughts in the confessional, as if they had actually acted upon them.

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For weeks, which ran into months, the priest had hounded her with incessant questions. *Have you been thinking about a boy's penis? Was it erect? Did you want to touch it? Did you have other sexual thoughts? How often did you consent to these thoughts? When did you have these thoughts? Did you put your hand down there, on your private parts? Did you caress yourself? Did you masturbate? Did you insert anything into your vagina? Was it your finger? Did you insert a foreign object? Did you enjoy the feeling? Did you let boys touch you there? Did you allow men to touch you? Was he a married man? Were your breasts ever swollen and sore? Did you imagine a man touching them?*

Week after week she had avoided the confessional, knowing she would be plagued by questions. She never knew how to answer the interrogation. If she denied the thoughts, the priest would reprimand her, *Don't tell fibs. I know you have thoughts. All girls have thoughts. You must deal with these thoughts. If you don't, you will rot in Hell. If you continue to tell lies in the confessional, you will burn in Hell forever and ever, and all your family will burn in Hell for eternity. Do you understand that, my child?* As the weeks and months went by, the priest continued grilling her more and more. *Do not deny it. All girls insert their finger into their vagina. It may be in your sleep. When was the last time you awoke to find your finger in there, moving back and forth, and, you were wet? Had your nipples grown hard and firm as you had your orgasm? You must admit to me. You will not tell a lie.*

Parents in the parish had been told that nuns would be conducting evening religious classes for teens. No mention was made about the priest inviting

individual girls to his rooms for extra lessons. Margaret was one of many girls receiving these private lessons from the priest. The priest, despite his interrogations in the confessional, was very friendly and supportive towards Margaret in his private chambers. He repeatedly told Margaret how special she was to him, and because he was the embodiment of Christ on earth, when she spoke to him, she was speaking directly to Jesus. Because she had a special place in his heart, she also had a special place in Jesus' heart. It was on her first visit to the rectory when the priest stated, *'When you kiss my hand, you are kissing the hand of Jesus, because Christ enters my body.'*

As the months went by, the priest repeatedly stated it would be a sin for Margaret to tell anyone about what happened in his rectory. This was because his private chambers were an extension of the confessional.

Margaret, out of fear, told nobody about how she, through the priest, had touched Jesus' penis, how she had kissed Jesus' penis, and eventually, as the months went by, how Jesus' penis had entered her vagina.

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It was easy to allow Jake to have his way with her under the bleachers at the baseball diamond. She was doing with Jake, as she had done with her priest, she developed the habit of removing herself from her body and viewing what was happening from above. It was like watching a movie and, during this time, she could feel nothing. It was as if someone had injected her whole body with Novocaine, and she was numb all over.

The first time with Jake, she feigned virginity. Jake, unlike the priest, did not use lubrication before penetration, and she was very tense and dry. It was difficult for Jake to insert his penis. He assumed it was because this was her first time. He never questioned if he was the father when he found out Margaret was pregnant.

Without any notification, one Sunday when Margaret was in grade twelve, a new priest appeared in the pulpit. Nothing was said about where the previous priest had gone to. Soon after, Margaret married and never went back to church again. However, she had her two girls baptised as Catholics, and she insisted they attend church on a regular basis. Why? Margaret did not know why, other than having an innate fear bad things would happen to them if they did not find Jesus through the Catholic Church.

When Jake left, Margaret and the two girls moved back home, and shortly after starting her job at the Legislative Buildings, Margaret became very close to Donna, one of her co-workers. As the two women grew to feel comfortable with each other, they started confiding. Donna confessed that a parish priest in her home town in Southern Manitoba had seduced her, and she eventually had a baby, which was given up for adoption. Because of this, she was estranged from her family. Her tale sounded very much like Margaret's experience.

Eventually, Donna gave Margaret a copy of a book, *I Was a Priest*, a book banned by the Catholic Church, a book written by a priest who had left The Church. Donna told her to look at chapter six, *The Mental Tortures of Confession*, which was a condemnation of the confessional. Donna had told her, the seduction of young girls and women by priests in the confessional is so rampant, The Church has a term for it, '*De sollicitatione in confessionalis*'. It was all explained in this book, as

well as in several other books, one of which was written during the previous century by a former Catholic priest, Charles Chiniquy. In all, there were scores of well-hidden books which describe how priests seduce women and girls by playing a power game. At first the priest is gentle, then hard, alternating from rebuking, rewarding, chastising, and then forgiving. It was an adult and little girl relationship. What greater power? It wasn't just women and girls; this book also described how many of these paedophile priests practised homosexuality with young boys. The author of *I Was a Priest* suggested, more than ninety percent of priests are sexual perverts, with most being paedophiles.

As she read the book, Margaret realised why she now refused to go to church. She had been petrified by the confessional, not only by the thought of describing her innermost thoughts and feelings to a man, but also by her growing thoughts about committing sin.

Margaret became tormented and confused by her thoughts. If she repeated anything spoken in confession outside the confessional, she was told she would be damned to spend eternity in Hell. But she did repeat it. She had confessed to Donna, after Donna had revealed to her that, at the age of fifteen, she also had been seduced by a priest. She met him regularly in the rectory, and, in the end, she had a baby. She had gone for a routine visit to the family doctor, who revealed his findings to her parents. The priest was transferred to a parish in Ontario or Québec. It was all hush-hush. One evening, a Church official, along with a man wearing a black suit and tie, whom she did not know, took her to Villa Rosa, a home for unwed mothers in Winnipeg. At birth, the baby was taken from her. Except for her cousin Felicity, she had not seen any of her family since then, nor

her child. Felicity told her that her family wanted nothing to do with her. They had been threatened with excommunication if they spoke to or saw their daughter, whom, an archbishop told them, had the Devil living in her. This archbishop explained to them, it was the Devil who had seduced the priest; the priest was a victim, who was sucked in by the Devil living within their daughter.

Margaret remembered Donna's words, "I was lucky, most girls were taken away and never seen again. Where they were taken, we could only go by the rumours we heard, a reform school, a mental hospital, a work house, we never knew for certain. I escaped from Villa Rosa and I changed my name. One day, I'll tell you the story, the whole story."

Every night Margaret was plagued by nightmares. She would wake up at three or four in the morning in a cold sweat. The Devil was pursuing her. In each dream, his pointed, barbed tail would come up from behind him and stick up flat against his bare belly. As this devil came closer, she recognised, in his distorted ruddy features, the face of her confessor, her former priest, Father Lucifer. In her dream, she would look down to see his throbbing tail change into an erect penis. She then remembered a long suppressed memory. This priest had forced her to take his penis into her mouth. At this point in her dream, she would start to gag and choke, as she knew she had done in real life as his ejaculant shot down her throat, and he, grabbing her hair, forced her to keep his member in her mouth. She remembered feeling certain she would choke to death, but she never did. The priest always pulled out in time, and allowed her to cough and spit, until she could breathe. He would give her a glass of water. As she sipped the cooling liquid, he told her, if she ever spoke to anyone about what went on in the confessional, or in his private

chambers, she, along with all her family, would go directly to Hell. She had believed him. After all, she believed he was a servant of God, and she knew everyone was afraid of him. He had power, The Church had power, ultimate power. In her mind, this was verified when Donna told her that her seducer was never punished, he was transferred to another parish and everything had been hushed up. Just like Margaret's family, Donna's family made it plain that the priest was a victim of a possessed woman. Margaret was certain Donna was telling the truth. Donna's story was very close to her own. It all had to be true.



DECEMBER 1964

Francis had just turned seventeen. He was putting on weight and starting to look like a man. Also, he was starting to feel like a man. He had been given more responsibility at work. He was continuing to work towards his high school diploma. His talks with Mr. Sutton and Mr. Kapusta were getting deeper and deeper. He had just finished reading, for the third time, a book, *The Prince*, written by Niccolò Machiavelli and loaned to him by Mr. Kapusta.

"You should read this book," Mr. Kapusta had told him. "It has a lot in it about our world. Basically, it verifies, the only justice we have is, *Might is Right*, as taught to us by various philosophers. These men spoke the truth despite not being allowed to speak freely. Their lives were continually in danger if they dared to speak against the establishment, which was controlled by The Church. Machiavelli, for one, did speak freely. In the Western World, every successful leader, right up to this present day, has used this book as his bible. Machiavelli was eventually exiled, but he escaped being roasted at the stake, mainly because some royalty found his teachings useful, and Machiavelli agreed to refrain from speaking to the general public."

Mr. Kapusta had also told Francis much about his own life. How he had been born in The Austro-Hungarian Empire of a Ukrainian father and an Austrian mother, who was a mixture of various ethnicities. Both parents had been highly educated, and the family had money.

It was on a cold Saturday evening, when Francis, as he was in the habit of doing, walked into Mr. Kapusta's house, where they sat in the living room with a warm

fire in the fireplace. Each had a glass of single malt Scotch, and Mr. Kapusta was stuffing a pipe with a black tobacco mixture.

"Mr. Kapusta, you shouldn't smoke."

Mr. Kapusta laughed, "I am very happy to hear you say that. A short while ago you wouldn't say shit if your mouth was full of it. Now you speak freely. I'm happy for you. You are gaining confidence and poise."

"Still, you should not be smoking."

"And you should not be drinking Scotch. You're underage and it probably isn't good for you."

Francis chuckled, "Everything, but everything in moderation. Is that not what you keep telling me?"

"That is correct. And on a cold winter's evening, a glass of good Scotch is just what the doctor ordered."

Mr. Kapusta rose from his armchair and poked at the fire, before setting a fresh log onto the grate. As he sat down, leaning back and putting his slippered feet onto a worn ottoman, he spoke right out in a very serious tone, "This evening Francis, I'm going to tell you what is probably the most important fact you will ever learn in your life. Some call it a secret of life, but, I assure you it is no secret; there are hundreds, perhaps thousands of books out there, which state emphatically what I'm about to tell you. However, these books go mostly unread."

Francis sat silently wondering if Mr. Kapusta was indeed serious, or was this a joke?

As if Mr. Kapusta could read Francis' thoughts, he affirmed, "I assure you Francis, I am not joking around. I suggest you write down what I have to say, and repeat it every day, to yourself, for the rest of your life. It is that important."

Francis took a sip from his snifter, rolled the liquid around his mouth before swallowing, "I am taking you serious. I'm only wondering what could be so important."

"Briefly, my advice to you, and I'll expound on it so you know how important it is; my advice to you is, do not believe one word I say to you, ever."

Francis broke out in laughter.

Mr. Kapusta turned even more solemn, "You are not taking this seriously."

"No, I'm not. How can you be serious, telling me something as absurd as that?"

"That is what I'm trying to get into your fat head Francis. That is why most people aren't aware of this secret. They do not take it seriously. I assure you though, I am serious, dead serious. Now, let me explain."

Francis nodded his head, "Okay, I'll listen."

"Mark Twain stated it in a humorous manner. He was aware, if you can get a person to laugh, they let down their guard long enough to allow an idea to get into their head."

Mr. Kapusta waited a few moments to allow Francis to speak, but Francis sat, reticent, intently gazing at his companion.

Mr. Kapusta continued, "I quote, *'It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so'.*"

The two men sat, unblinking, as if in a contest to stare the other down. Finally, Francis spoke, "I don't get it. I don't think it's funny at all."

"No, Francis, it is not funny. What Mark Twain was trying to say is, one should never be dogmatic, and they should question everything. Do you understand?"

"Not quite."

"As I stated, in my mind, this is the most important lesson anyone could learn. It should be taught to every child from the day they are born. Question everything."

"Question everything?"

"That is correct, question everything. I may be telling you something which I honestly believe to be true; but I could be wrong. Therefore, it is your duty to verify everything. Ask others, go to the library, do research; if you cannot verify it, do not accept it as fact. In fact, accept nothing as fact, since new information may change your conclusion. Do you understand?"

Francis hesitated before answering, "It only makes common sense. I mean, I'm always open to new information."

"That's not what I'm trying to say. It does make common sense, but, people become closed minded. Take for example God. People assume there's a God because it is an accepted fact. But, that's just it. It is not an accepted fact. It is, in all probability, a fairy-tale."

"Okay!"

"The Jesuits have an instruction for their members. They explain, if someone states something loud enough, and often enough, it becomes a fact."

"Okay."

"Confess your sins to a priest and they will be forgiven. Where does it say that in The Bible?"

"I don't know."

Mr. Kapusta laughed as he continued, "It doesn't. Nowhere in The Bible does it say that, yet, millions believe it. Why, because the confessional is a means of controlling people, of controlling their minds, messing with their brains. None of it is true. It is all part of a scheme to control. And The Church is an expert at psychology and control. Get it?"

"Not really. But, I think I get the gist of it."

Mr. Kapusta, after a few minutes of silence, changed the topic. "Have you read the novel 1984?"

"No. I've never heard of it."

"It was written by Eric Arthur Blair who wrote under the pen-name George Orwell. It was written as a prophetic novel. However, Mr. Blair actually wrote it in a sarcastic manner, as he was, in reality, writing about the present when the novel was written."

"I don't understand what you are talking about."

"Francis. What I'm trying to have you understand is, for the most part, people do not see what is right in front of their noses. People are told falsehoods every day, which they believe to be true. Orwell showed this in a futuristic state. However, he was trying to get the reader to look around and see, that the future he was writing about, was actually happening at their present time, in 1949, when the book was written. And, indeed, it is happening today. It has been happening in the present all through history. That's what the author was trying to show."

"I still don't get what you're talking about."

"Okay Francis, let's look at a different book. Are you familiar with The Wizard of Oz?"

"I saw the movie."

"Okay, the movie, unlike most Hollywood movies, does actually show the key points of the book. First, it is stating there is no God. Dorothy and her friends discovered that the Wizard of Oz is a fake. And, of course, the Wizard is a metaphor for God. Secondly, the lion, the scarecrow and the tin man came to realise they have the Power within themselves. Praying to the Wizard, metaphor for God, is a waste of time. It's pointless and fruitless. Each of us has the power within us."

"I don't understand what your point is."

"You will Francis. One day, you will. Just remember, nothing is as it seems. That's the problem. People have never been taught how to see the present. They have eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear. They have fingers, but

cannot feel. They need to look at the past and the future in order to see the present."

The two men sat in silence for several minutes before Mr. Kapusta continued, "The main reason why religion spreads like wildfire is because people have instincts. Instincts run on emotion, while atheism does not. You must understand that religion breeds from ignorance while atheism grows from knowledge and understanding."

Francis gave Mr. Kapusta a questioning look but said nothing.

"Francis, you don't fully understand, that's obvious. Let me explain further about why religion prevails. When I was younger, I did not know the difference between dialogue and argument. What I had experienced in my life was argument. I was used to hearing people arguing and the arguments often, especially if fueled by alcohol, would turn to shouting, and the shouting would turn to violence. Instead of reasoned conversation, there was opinion, opinion with no facts to back it up. Instead of the sharing of opinions and information, there were entrenched positions, which, if challenged, made the person with a different opinion, the enemy. Do you understand what I'm saying, Francis?"

"I agree with what you're saying. I've seen and heard the same things."

"Okay, what I'm trying to get across is my understanding of religion. Religion is not based on facts. It is only based on opinions. For religion to be spread, anyone who questions religion must be put down, with violence if necessary. This is what has happened in the past. Heretics have been burned at the stake. The cross is a subliminal metaphor for a sword. Every religion has been spread, not by rational

talk, but by violence, by complete subjugation, and by threats of death, whenever it is needed, in order to spread '*The Word*'."

Francis acknowledged, "Yes, I can accept that."

"Now, Francis, I will tell you why atheism does not spread like religion. Any educated and rational person will not profess themselves to be an atheist; instead, they will usually state they are an agnostic. Why, because declaring oneself to be atheist is being dogmatic, and also, society, in their stupidity and ignorance will turn against an atheist. Any sane, rational, and knowledgeable person, would never be dogmatic. They are forever seeking wisdom and knowledge and they are willing to change their opinion if sufficient evidence warrants it. Only ignorant people are dogmatic. And, the sad fact of life is, ignorant people see dogmatic declarations as being a sign of strength, and they see a willing openness to new ideas, as being a weakness. Instinctively, ignorant people are drawn towards strength. It is a survival instinct which only a rational, intelligent, and knowledgeable person, may understand. Do you get it, Francis?"

"I think I understand. By declaring I'm an atheist, I am showing stubbornness, but by declaring I'm agnostic, makes me appear wishy-washy to the ignorant and mule-headed."

"Francis! You've got it! And this is one reason why great minds, like Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Charles Darwin, Aldous Huxley, Abraham Lincoln, and many others, would never publically state they were atheist. Another reason, was the fact they would be ostracised, and possibly assassinated. Thomas Paine, for example, if he did not profess a belief in God,

would have been, in his time, tortured and burned at the stake. In fact, Thomas Paine, despite declaring a belief in God, was imprisoned and narrowly escaped execution."

Mr. Kapusta continued, "Let me give you an example closer to home which indicates how, in a supposedly free democratic country like Canada, rampant discrimination exists. First, let me ask you, what is wrong with communism?"

"What is wrong with communism? I don't know. I haven't looked into it. I know very little about communism."

"Francis that is exactly what I'm trying to put across to you. You know nothing about communism and you admit it. However, many Canadians and also the Canadian government discriminate against communists, even though communist ideology is not much different than Canadian ideology. For example, let's consider Mr. Goldstein, you know him and his family, don't you?"

"Yes, I know Mr. and Mrs. Goldstein, their son is older than me, so I don't have much to do with him."

"So you have nothing against the Goldstein family?"

"No, why would I?"

"Mr. Goldstein joined the Communist Party and made it known that he is an atheist. Some people will not associate with this family because the police once arrested Mr. Goldstein and interrogated him because he is a member of the Communist Party. During the modern witch hunts, communists have been routinely rounded up, and sometimes detained for long periods, despite having no

formal charges laid against them. You were too young to remember this. It all happened in the early nineteen-fifties. Mr. Goldstein, today, is still a communist and still an atheist. The McCarthy scare has died down, and the police are now, for the most part, leaving communists alone. However, the police have a thick folder on Mr. Goldstein and he is continually under the threat of arrest, just because he is a communist. Luckily Mr. Goldstein was born in Canada, if he hadn't been, he would, like many others, have been deported."

"So, what you're telling me is, communists are atheists, and they discriminate against religion?"

"No Francis. Officially, communists are atheists. They do not believe in God. However, according to what is happening, for example, in Russia, they not only tolerate religions, they protect peoples' rights to have and to practise any religion. In that respect, they have a greater sense of justice than Canada. Canada is hypocritical; they declare the government is secular, but, in fact, our governments not only promote God and The Church of England, they hold a bias towards them. Why do we, in our public schools, daily, sing God Save the Queen, say an Anglican prayer, and read from the Anglican bible? Why do we just read from the Anglican Bible and not from other religious works? Why do we just say an Anglican prayer? Why not a Catholic or Muslim prayer?"

"I don't know. I do know that the Lord's Prayer we say in school is different than the one the nuns taught us in catechism. Also, the Catholic Bible is different than the King James version we read in school."

"Exactly, Catholics and Protestants have different Lord's Prayers, yet, in school only

the Protestant prayer is repeated. Canada proclaims The Inquisition is in the past but they are indeed practising it right now in Canada. It has died down in the last few years, but there is still a witch hunt for communists and other so called "perverse" people. Communists are lumped together with all sorts of immoral and corrupt people. They are not allowed freedom of thought and freedom of expression. You would think people would be up in arms."

A thought came to Francis' head, "Speaking of the Goldstein family, they live in a wartime house. Either Mr. or Mrs. Goldstein must have served in the military, is that not right?"

"Yes, Mr. Goldstein volunteered for the army in nineteen-thirty-nine when war broke out. Despite knowing he was a communist, and an atheist, the army was very glad to have him. He was a great asset to them. The main reason for this was, he speaks German, Polish and Ukrainian fluently. In Europe, he was frequently used as an interpreter, especially with German soldiers. But, after the war, our government, because he was a communist, declared him to be a possible threat to our national security."

"That does not sound very fair to me."

"It was not. That is what I am telling you, discrimination is not logical, and it has never been just, it has never been fair. However, people in power often use discrimination to their benefit. They use it to control the masses. You weren't born yet and you wouldn't have knowledge of the propaganda we had during the war about Germans and Japanese."

"Well, they were the enemy."

Mr. Kapusta laughed, "Yes, they were the enemy. However, Russia was our friend who was a big help to us. Without that help, Hitler probably would have won the war. Now that the war is over, Russia, for some reason, is now our enemy. How do things change so fast? Why was being a communist not important when we needed Mr. Goldstein and when we needed Russia, but, now that we no longer need them, communism is a problem?"

"Are there many communists in Canada?"

"We have some very well-known communists in Winnipeg. In fact Winnipeg has been looked upon as the communist centre of Canada. You've heard of Joe Zuken, Jacob Penner and Bill Kardash. During the Depression James Litterick, as a Communist Party member, was elected into the Manitoba Legislature. However, in nineteen-forty the Communist Party was outlawed and Litterick was compelled to give up his seat. Why isn't Manitoba history taught in schools? I'll tell you why, people might have a good reason to rebel against authorities."

Francis looked up, "I'll be honest with you. I really don't know much about communism or Marxism."

"To begin with Francis, most of what is attributed to Karl Marx was not said or written by him. We get a lot of false information because most people who spout off about communists and Marxism have never done their homework. Just like most religious people have never read their bible or any other holy book related to their religion, most anti-communists know absolutely nothing about communism. They just foam at the mouth. I believe in free speech, but, I demand to hear only informed free speech. You are not alone; most people do not know very much

about communism, capitalism, or what is going on right under their noses. Get informed before you open your mouth; that is what I am asking for. Don't you agree?"

"I do. Tomorrow I'll go to the library, the one on William. It's the only one which has a good selection."

"While you are there, look up concentration camps which Canada ran during the First World War."

"Concentration camps?"

"Mr. Lucki was in a concentration camp for over two years during the First World War. He had not committed a crime. However, because he was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he was condemned as an enemy alien and, like thousands of others, including women and children, he was thrown into a concentration camp. This was discrimination, throwing people in gaol not because of any crime, but because they were born in the wrong place. To add salt to his wounds, Mr. Lucki's son, in nineteen-thirty nine, joined the Canadian air force and became a pilot. His plane was shot down during a bombing mission. His body has never been recovered. Why was the son of an *'ENEMY ALIEN'* fighting for Canada? Where do we have justice in Canada? We do not."



NOVEMBER 1968

Francis and Mr. Kapusta were gazing into the flames as they sat on opposite sides of the fireplace. It had been a bitterly cold day, and Francis appreciated the warmth of Mr. Kapusta's front room. Francis had come over to help Mr. Kapusta bottle a batch of home-made wine. Afterwards, Mr. Kapusta showed Francis how to make Chicken Kiev, which the pair had for their supper. Mr. Kapusta was continually surprising Francis with his talents.

Francis asked in a serious manner, "Is there anything you don't know how to do?"

Mr. Kapusta seemed taken aback, "Oh, many things. Every day I'm learning something new. But, that is the key to keeping youthful. Like a child, one must forever keep interested and inquisitive about things."

Mr. Kapusta surprised Francis when he blurted out, "I put in for retirement."

"You're going to retire? Why? Aren't you too young?"

Mr. Kapusta laughed, "Francis, to tell you the truth, I am being forced to retire. Officially, I turn sixty-five very shortly, and, according to the rules, I must retire by age sixty-five. However, I'm actually seventy-one. When I immigrated into Canada, I had no birth certificate. I told the authorities I was born in nineteen-three, when, in fact, I was born in eighteen-ninety-seven. I'm actually seventy-one."

"Seventy-one? I wouldn't have believed it. You seem much too young."

"Thank-you Francis, I'll take that as a compliment."

"When's your last day of work?"

"Friday the thirteenth."

"Are you kidding? Friday the thirteenth?"

Mr. Kapusta laughed, "Yes, it's my idea of a joke. Friday, December thirteenth is my last day in the shops."

The pair sat in silence for a long while, each in their own thoughts, before Mr. Kapusta opened up by simply stating, "You may be interested in hearing my story."

"Your story?"

"Why not? I know all about you, and you know nothing about me. For example, how did I come to speak English, and how did I come to speak several other languages?"

Francis smiled, "How did you?"

"I was just a lad of eight when my parents sent me to live with relatives in England. It was nineteen-five. Europe's political environment was unsettled and there was a recession. My parents sent me to what they considered a safe and stable environment. I lived close to Liverpool, in a small village. I had mostly private tutors, both in Germany and then in England. Because of my tutors, and the fact I was living in a multi-cultural environment, when I arrived in England, I could already converse in English, as well as in German, French, Italian, Ukrainian, Polish, Russian and Spanish. My parents were strong believers in education. They wanted me to study at Oxford. However, I had different interests. You may find this hard to

believe, but I eventually studied theology with the intention of becoming a priest. Not a Roman Catholic priest, but a Byzantine priest."

At this point, Mr. Kapusta, looking up at Francis, commented, "You look puzzled."

"I am. I can't imagine you as a priest."

"I never actually worked as a priest, I ended up working in the Vatican library where I had access to all the Vatican archives. I spent hours researching and reading, since my official duties took up little of my time."

Mr. Kapusta smiled and continued, "While I was working in the Vatican library, one of my co-workers was Daniel Meadows, who, as I did, had deferred his ordination and came to work alongside me in the library. We both had this insatiable desire for knowledge and truth, and we both were becoming more and more disillusioned with The Church. The more truth we uncovered, the more appalled we became. We realised that there were others like us, who, with increased knowledge about The Church, rather than moving away from The Church, were drawn closer to it, since they became addicted to power, especially the power which knowledge of devious ways gave them. They would often become increasingly evil."

"Mr. Kapusta, you seem to have very little respect for The Church. Do you hate it?"

"No, no, on the contrary, I am completely ambivalent towards The Church. I have come to realise I can do nothing about what is going on, and I accept that; just as Daniel Meadows has now accepted it. I accept the fact that the average member of a congregation will refuse to even look at any evidence which goes against their religious organisation, no matter which denomination they belong to. The true

definition of religion is, *dogmatically holding on to irrational ideas, while stubbornly ignoring any information which may contradict those ideas.*"

"In general, people have one trait which keeps them down, they always gravitate towards power. They will lick the boot that kicks them. Or, as Daniel Meadows states, they will wipe the ass that shits on them. It's homo-sapiens instinctual weakness, it is part of every person's instinct. Unfortunately these people will also bite the hand that feeds them. They view someone who accepts charity as being weak, having no power, so they resent anyone who feeds them. This is because they view the acceptance of charity as a weakness, and it is. Charity can be addictive. Why work if you are getting a daily handout. But, a daily handout makes the person a slave to the hand that is feeding them."

"In the former Roman Empire, for the commoners, the government would, '*give them bread and circuses*'. These people were on welfare because there was no need for their labour. The majority of people in the Roman Empire were slaves who worked without wages. Because commoners did not work, there was no need for them to be educated, and, the authorities made certain they would not be educated. All throughout history, people in power have done whatever is necessary to keep the average person totally ignorant. Much worse, they manipulate people in a way which forces them to have a determination to remain ignorant. They get people to believe that any knowledge which contradicts their beliefs can only come from The Devil. In this way they keep the hoi polloi in a constant state of stupidity."

Francis gave Mr. Kapusta a questioning look, "That is very strong language. In fact, it is a very dogmatic statement, and you have emphasised to me, more than once,

one should never be dogmatic. You sound as if you are fulfilling your definition of religion. Are you turning religious on me?"

"Francis, you are correct, and I have no argument, and I do sound like a religious fanatic. However, on this point, I feel I have to be somewhat dogmatic, I feel that strongly about it. Sometimes it takes very strong language to knock some sense into ignorant and stubborn peoples' heads. Sometimes one must beat them over the head with a two-by-four, or pry their head open with a crowbar before you can get a new idea into their head. If you know what I mean."

"Is it fair to call someone stupid? Isn't that being arrogant? And, do you think I'm too stubborn to accept new ideas?"

Mr. Kapusta leaned back in his chair, gazing at the ceiling, and as if talking to himself, he began by asking a question, "You have little chats with Mr. Sutton do you not?"

"Yes, yes I do."

"Has he ever told you about his being called stupid, and how that accusation changed his life ... for the better?"

Francis was evidently puzzled as he answered, "No."

Mr. Kapusta continued staring at the ceiling as he started his tale, "I don't think Cy Sutton will speak to you about his past, so I will. I think you should hear his story. It would give you a much better understanding of your boss. I hope it leads to you having more respect for him."

"I already have great respect for him. I couldn't respect him any more than I do."

Mr. Kapusta leaned forward and, unblinking, stared Francis straight in the eye,

"Oh, I think you could. In fact, I know you could. Just listen to this story."

Francis sat in silence as Mr. Kapusta continued, "During the Second World War, Cy Sutton joined the army. A barracks had been set up at the University of Manitoba and Cy was being trained there. Tents had been erected for the men to sleep in. They ate their meals in Taché Hall, attended lectures in available classrooms, and marched about the campus for much of the day. One morning, as the drill sergeant was leading the troops down one of the roads, they passed a group of students, smoking and lounging around on the grass under one of the many mature trees on the quadrangle. One of the soldiers yelled out as they passed, '*There's a bunch of zombie cowards*'. One of the students from under the tree nonchalantly yelled back, '*And who are the stupid ones?*' At this remark, many of the soldiers turned their heads to look at this impudent absconder, but they were compelled not to step out of formation, even though they were all visibly incensed. The sergeant yelled out, '*Eyes Front*', and the troops marched on."

"Fifteen or so minutes later, when the uniformed men had circled back to the quadrangle, the students were nowhere to be seen, and Cy, to his knowledge, never saw any of those students again. However, that remark, that accusation of him and the others as being stupid, haunted Cy, day and night, for years. When that student had yelled out this insult, Cy, along with many of his fellow volunteers, instinctively wanted to run over and punch this young student's lights out. Later that evening, while lying in bed, Cy wondered why he had become so incensed with a simple insult. Then he began to contemplate and ask himself if the shoe did

not fit. He wondered if it was not the truth hitting home that caused the hurt and shame. Was he being made a fool? Was he being stupid?"

"Over the years, this scene ran over and over in Cy's head and he questioned again and again if he had acted stupidly by joining a fight he knew nothing about. He questioned if he had acted rationally, or had he made a thoughtless decision. Wasn't it the thing to do? After all, all of his friends were joining up. He admitted again and again, he didn't even know why this war was being fought. He had no idea what the issues were, and he began to wonder about the difference between his so called democracy, which had the people jumping to a monarch's aid, and the German people supporting their Führer, their father, which is the literal translation of Führer. He asked himself, if Hitler was actually much different from a king, their king. The only difference Cy could see was King George had inherited a throne, while Hitler had seized a throne. Didn't King George's ancestors also, originally, seize the throne? Cy wondered, if Hitler wins this war, wouldn't his decedents also inherit a throne? All of this kept going around and around in Mr. Sutton's head, and he began to feel very, very, foolish."

"As time went by, the thoughts, instead of diminishing, only increased, and young Cyril Sutton would continually wake up in the middle of the night with the same thought rolling around in his head. He fretted and asked himself if he had been stupid by acting without rationally thinking about what he was doing. He tried to convince himself that being brave, fighting for one's king and country, was the valiant and honourable thing to do. However, no matter how much he tried to persuade himself that he and the others were not stupid, he could not get that insult and the picture of that snobbish student out of his head."

Francis asked, "What's a zombie? That soldier shouted out, '*zombie cowards*', so what exactly is a zombie?"

"Zombie! Why that's just a silly insult which people use for anyone who shirks their duty, and refuses to sign up to go to war. It was originally a term given to soldiers who had been conscripted and had not entered the army voluntarily. But, this term was eventually extended to all men who, for any reason, appeared to be shirking their duty and not joining the fight. It's not much different than workers on strike shouting out to anyone crossing the picket line and calling them a '*scab*'. It is just a ridiculous insult in order to shame people into submission."

Mr. Kapusta continued with his story, "It came to a head on June sixth, nineteen-forty-four, D-Day. When the troops were disembarking on a beach in France, Cy had been ordered to stay back and help bury any dead on the beach. The others ran from the beach towards the cliffs in front of them. Cy was to roll any dead soldiers in their blankets, and cover them with a few inches of dirt or sand. As Cy rolled over the first corpse, he recognised his best friend, Andrew Bishop, who had joined the army the same day as he did, and trained with him. As he looked at his lifeless friend, Cy fell to his knees and cried. When he finished covering his friend, he sensed what he thought was a bee flying past him. He turned his head and felt another bee tickle his ear. In the noise of the battle, Cy did not realise that these things flying past his head were not insects, they were bullets. He was being fired upon from the cliffs above. Instinctively, Cy jumped up and ran in a zig-zag fashion to a shell hole where he dived to the bottom. He laid in there for hours until Allied reinforcements landed on the beach. All the while he lay in the shell-hole, those words, '*And, who are the stupid ones?*' kept pounding away in his head, over and

over again."

Francis looked intently at Mr. Kapusta, "Do you think it's stupid to fight in a war?"

"Yes Francis, it is stupid and that is what Mr. Sutton found out, all war is stupid. Of course, he had signed up for the duration and there was no way he could get out of it. He continued fighting. If you get to read philosophy you'll find that many philosophers have written about the stupidity of war. However, they also point out the profitability of war. For the past several thousand years our whole society has been about war. That is why blood sports are so popular. However, as these philosophers point out, it is time for us to turn from the adulation of warriors and bedizened glory of martial strife to the majesty of the common people and to the more glorious victories of peace."

Francis was clearly distressed as he stated, "My dad fought in the war. He was in the army. Was he stupid? Do you think he was stupid?"

"Francis, your father did what he thought was best. But, let me tell you what the final blow to Mr. Sutton was. This past spring, a man, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, was elected as the Canadian Prime Minister. This was a man who, during the war, was not just a 'zombie'; he was a 'scarper' who ridiculed volunteer soldiers, just like the student who had yelled out, asking, who the stupid ones are. Trudeau had remained a student in order not to be conscripted into the Canadian Service. Even worse, he was a man who, as a student at McGill, drove around Montréal on a motorcycle with a Swastika armband on his sleeve and a Prussian Army helmet on his head. When he thought he might be forced into active military service, Pierre Trudeau fled to the United States, where he enrolled in university at Harvard.

Don't you see why this really makes Mr. Sutton feel utterly stupid? Trudeau, who thumbed his nose at the authorities and was openly a 'zombie' and a 'scarper', eventually, was rewarded by being elected Prime Minister of Canada; and, he will, sometime very soon, be graciously accepted by Queen Elizabeth, who would never refer to him as a 'zombie'? Now, Francis, you tell me, who were the stupid ones?"

"Are you certain of all this?"

"I have known Pierre Trudeau personally, and I knew his family as well. I have witnessed everything I tell you. My words are first hand and not hearsay. How does Trudeau get away with the newspapers not printing a word of his past? And why have the newspapers portrayed Robert Stanfield, a more just and able leader, as a bungling idiot? I'll tell you how and why. The Trudeau family has money and friends. That is the way it is. You would be surprised to learn what the papers, the so-called free presses, do not print, won't print."

"I find it very hard to believe what you're telling me."

"I believe you do. What would you say if I told you that three of Prince Charles' uncles were Nazi officers in the German Army during the war?"

"Nazi officers?"

"Yes, all three were Charles' uncles, through the Mountbatten line, by way of his father, Prince Phillip. Why don't you know this? It's common knowledge. History books detail how the aristocracy throughout Europe are all somehow related. Even the former Russian Czars were related to European kings and queens. You don't know this because it is not publicised. Papers don't print it. It is passive censorship."

Some facts remain invisible and not readily available. Libraries censor by keeping some books off the shelves. These books are in the catalogue but difficult to find when they are hidden in a back closet."

"Are you certain about Charles' uncles?"

"Of course I'm certain. I could tell you so many surprising things. For example, would you believe I once knew Adolf Hitler?"

"Now I know your telling fibs!"

"No, Francis. Adolf Hitler visited his brother and sister-in-law in Liverpool in nineteen-twelve, before the First World War began. Hitler's brother, Alois, being raised as a Roman Catholic, married a Catholic woman, Bridget Elizabeth Dowling who was an Irish Catholic girl from Dublin, where Alois first met her. The young couple eloped and got married in London, England. Eventually, they moved to Liverpool and had one child, William Patrick Hitler. Adolf Hitler visited his brother and wife in Liverpool for an extended period of time. This is when I met Adolf Hitler. I had met Alois Hitler and his wife when they were running a restaurant in Liverpool. One of my German acquaintances knew them quite well. Adolf Hitler did not speak English and I was happy to have talks with him in order to improve my German. German is one of the languages I had studied, and having lived in England for a few years with few people to speak German to, my German was beginning to get a bit rusty. Now, I'll tell you the funny part, Adolf Hitler's nephew, Alois Hitler's son William, in nineteen-forty-four, joined the United States Navy. In essence, he was fighting against his uncle, Adolf Hitler."

"Oh, come on Mr. Kapusta, now I know you're pulling my leg!"

"I assure you I am not, Francis. And, if you like I can give you proof. You see, Adolf Hitler's sister-in-law, as well as his nephew, are alive and well, and still living in the United States. The nephew changed his last name to Houston and eventually married and had children. Mrs. Hitler is still living in New York City. Go to the library, you'll find a picture of the nephew signing up for the American navy. It was in all the major newspapers, even in some Canadian papers. What do you think of that?"

"Mr. Kapusta, that is just too much. You are pulling my leg."

"I can assure you, I am not. Because I was his mother's trusted friend, young Willy, as Hitler's nephew was called, paid me a visit in Canada while he was on a lecture tour. In a way, his mother was in a sticky mess. When she married Alois Hitler, it was the law that she had to adopt her husband's nationality, which was Austrian. And, when Austria was annexed by Germany, she immediately became a German citizen and an enemy alien living in England. Even though her husband had abandoned her and fled to Germany, she, because she was a devout Roman Catholic, refused to ask for a divorce and regain her Irish citizenship. When she realised war between England and Germany was inevitable and she could be arrested and incarcerated as an enemy alien, she knew something had to be done. Her son struck up a deal with the British authorities. You see, young Willy Hitler had been hired as a British spy."

"What? Is this some kind of a joke?"

"Francis, you would be surprised at how many people are spies in this world. Britain, and all governments, have had and still have many spies working in foreign

countries. William Hitler was a writer and traditionally many writers have worked as spies. People accept that writers are nosy and ask a lot of questions. This is what they do, and so do spies. Making a living as a writer is a very good ruse for a spy, and, Britain has always taken advantage of this fact. Take for example William Somerset Maugham. It is common information that he worked as a spy for the English government. I suggest you read his collection of Ashenden stories which detail his work as a spy in the First World War. Take note though, these stories have been highly censored and extensively fictionalised by English authorities. Maugham had signed a secrecy agreement and needed to get permission to publish anything he wrote. His spy stories have many omissions and fictional interpolations."

"So, what you're telling me is that spying is something that is commonplace?"

"Exactly, that is what I'm telling you. Maugham though, had a habit of writing between the lines. He wrote things that were not explicit but told telling tales. He was a hedonist and a paedophile who hob-knobbed with royalty and famous people. He was aware of all kinds of secrets."

"What has this got to do with William Hitler?"

Mr. Kapusta laughed, "Let me finish, I feel like telling you some interesting stories. I will give you an example of Somerset Maugham's way of hiding a secret in plain sight. Have you read Maugham's book, *The Razor's Edge*?" Reaching over, Mr. Kapusta pulled a book from his bookcase, "You may take this home if you wish to read it. Here, the author is speaking about a Mr. Elliot Templeton whose family for generations belonged to the Episcopal Church but this man converted to the

Roman Catholic Church despite being a complete hedonist who cared little for religion. Maugham describes Elliot Templeton's acumen in rising above humble beginnings to hobnob with aristocracy and influential people. Why did he convert to a new religion? It is all explained by Maugham's tale about the nineteen-twenty-nine stock market crash. Elliot Templeton, in this book, states, *"My friends at the Vatican told me that the crash was coming and strongly advised me to sell all my American securities. The Catholic Church has the wisdom of twenty centuries behind it and I didn't hesitate for a moment."* And, of course, he followed their advice and sold all his American securities and bought gold just before the crash. After the crash he bought back his securities at bargain-basement prices."

"You are telling me that the Vatican was part of some sort of stock market scheme?"

"That could be, but, what Maugham is pointing out is that the Vatican is much more than a church. Maugham provides just enough information to allow an astute reader to come to the realisation that the Vatican is one of the richest and most powerful and influential organisations in the world. The Church is no more than a legitimate front for a vast empire, much bigger than the former Roman Empire it replaced."

"That is food for thought. I need to think about this. But, it does make sense."

"It certainly does. Now, one more thing which Maugham does in this book. Without spelling it out, he shows the relationship between the Vatican and the Duce, which translated into English means the leader, and the Duce, in real life, was Mussolini. Incidentally, Duce is a homonym of Deuce, the Devil. It was

Mussolini who gave the Vatican its independence from Italy, making it a free state. And, as a free state, all of its business dealings, records and books are privy only to them. None of them may be subpoenaed by any court. The Vatican is run in complete secrecy. This is all described, mostly between the lines, in this book. You see Francis, that's the thing, the best place to hide something is in plain sight. Maugham tells everything, but most readers will just not get it, much the same as most people who read the Bible, just don't get it. They, for the most part, do not want to see it. They pretend it is not there."

"I'm beginning to understand, and I don't like it. It's like the whole world is being fooled."

"Francis, it is remarkable how the public will look at things which are in plain sight and not see them. For example, it is common knowledge today that the Vatican is a busy centre of international diplomacy. Papal diplomats are working in many countries throughout the world, and many nations have diplomats in Rome working with the Vatican. In almost every country a Papal Nuncio or Papal delegate is stationed at the Capital City and his duties are not only to supervise Church activities, but mainly they consist in observing the politics of that country and reporting his findings to the Vatican. The Apostolic Delegate, indeed, is not only the representative of the Roman Catholic Church, but he is also the ambassador of a foreign Government, the Independent State of the Vatican City."

"Francis, I want you to understand that Papal diplomacy has been in operation for many centuries. It was especially active at the time when Popes of Rome ruled over large and influential States. Today, it is not less active nor less efficient, but it is more subtle and more disguised. The main purpose of Vatican diplomacy is to

preserve and increase Papal authority and prestige throughout the world."

Francis was quiet and Mr. Kapusta continued, "Papal diplomacy is not concerned about the personal welfare of her subjects, but greatly concerned with increasing Papal influence of foreign governments. I often wonder about why someone like the former Bishop in Winnipeg, Frank Wood, leaves the Church and then becomes a Protestant. I have known many of these men. Quite a few get married after becoming a Presbyterian, or a member of some other Protestant church. I ask myself if, possibly, some of them are actually spies, still working for the Vatican, but outwardly part of an enemy institution. I wouldn't be surprised."

Francis laughed, "This all sounds much like James Bond."

"I know Francis. I sometimes wonder if my imagination doesn't get away from me. But, when you consider some of the things that have happened in The Church over the years, one tends to wonder. It's much like a Shakespeare play, full of intrigue. In my lifetime, I have witnessed the Pope making concordats with dictators such as Mussolini, but no effort was ever made to obtain individual liberties for the people who suffer under dictatorships. It is evident, the Vatican is never concerned about the welfare of individual citizens. They are only concerned about the prestige and influence of the Papal government."

Mr. Kapusta paused as if in deep reverie before he continued, "In Canada, I know for a fact, Vatican agents are very active. The Apostolic Delegation in Ottawa has many secret documents which prove that they are well informed on Canada's political activities. These documents would cause much surprise and indignation if exposed to the public."

Mr. Kapusta smiled and returned to a former topic, "One thing you must do when you read Maugham's book is to question what you read."

"What do you mean?"

"You must develop the habit of questioning everything. You must have the curiosity to find out if what you see, read, or hear can be taken at face value.

Maugham, as he is describing Eliot Templeton is also hinting at himself. Does he have a façade? Of course he does, everyone does. What's his façade? Maugham, or Willy, as he is known to his friends, is a hedonist and an aesthete, a lover of all things pleasurable, and his pleasure is in paedophilia. He loves having sex with young boys. This is the main reason he does not live in England. His type of behaviour is against the laws of England. However, he gets away with it in Italy and the south of France."

"Why are you telling me all this? Are you homosexual?"

"No, Francis, I am not. One day I'll tell you about my sex life but right now I'm giving you a lesson to question everything. Maugham, in this book comes across as a real English gentleman who is loving, charitable and fair. In real life he is not. He will donate to charities, but he is not charitable. These young boys he takes advantage of, does he try to better their lives? He throws them a few dollars in return for his jollies, but he thinks no more of them than the cellophane he rips off his cigarette package and discards."

"Maugham, as an espionage agent, came to North America to help rally Americans to go to war against Germany. While he was here he frequented Hollywood where some of his books were made into movies. While there he often attended George

Cukor's pool parties."

"What do you mean, pool parties?"

"George Cukor was a homosexual who gave many men their start in film. Known homosexual men such as Montgomery Clift, Randolph Scott, Rock Hudson, Cary Grant and Cole Porter frequented his parties. It was a place for homosexuals to come out of the closet for a while and enjoy themselves. They could drop their façades for a little while and feel free."

Francis sighed, "I'm beginning to understand what you and Mr. Sutton are telling me. Everything in life is not what it seems. I'm to question everything and take nothing at face value."

"That's true Francis. You see, in a way, most people are fooled because they are not educated. Look at Shakespeare, most students don't want to study works attributed to him in school. But, much of life, such as power struggles on religious and political levels can be better understood if people would only study Shakespeare."

"What do you mean, attributed to Shakespeare?"

"Shakespeare was not a playwright. He was an actor and producer, but, he never wrote plays."

"Who then, wrote them?"

"I would bet money on Amelia Lanier."

"I've never heard of her."

"No, like most people, I am sure you haven't. But, I'm sorry I brought this up. Let's get back to our topic. We'll carry on with Amelia Lanier, who was baptized as Aemilia Bassano, at a later date. She led a very interesting life. Now, as I was saying, the British government hired many writers in their secret service. Some of these were used to gather information. For example Maugham, who spoke fluent French, reported on the atmosphere of pre-war France. His reports suggested that many Frenchmen would gladly have the Germans take over their country. They thought they would do better under German domination. Patriotism, for many, was regarded as a notion any civilised man should have outgrown. Maugham's newspaper articles told a different tale. For the newspapers, he wrote exactly opposite to his official reports which he sent to the British government. Maugham has explained it all in his book, *Strictly Personal*. Maugham ended up going to the United States for the duration of the war, with orders to stir up patriotism and induce warm feelings towards England."

Mr. Kapusta continued to speak about Adolf Hitler's nephew, "As for William Hitler, he proved to be a useful spy while living in Germany during the thirties. However, in nineteen-thirty-eight he was given an ultimatum, give up his British citizenship or leave the country. He left the country and returned to England. The English had a job for him. They suggested he go to America in order to tour the United States and Canada, giving lectures about, *Why I hate my Uncle*. He made a deal, he would be allowed to bring along his mother to the United States, and, as an award, the two of them would be given American citizenship. In order to keep his relationship with the American and British secret services a secret, it was arranged that William Randolph Hearst would be part of this ruse by hiring William Hitler for the lecture tours, and by having Hitler write articles for his publications. In January nineteen-

thirty-nine, Willy Hitler and his mother Bridget arrived in New York. When war broke out the next September, there was a hitch. William Hitler, as a British citizen would be conscripted into the British or, possibly, the Canadian services. England did not want this, they believed Willy was more valuable as a propagandist stirring up anti-German sentiments in America. As another ruse, William applied to join the U.S. Navy and was denied with the reason being he was a Hitler and could not be trusted. Then, to continue with this ruse, Willy made an appeal directly to President Roosevelt. In January nineteen-forty-four, with much fanfare and with reporters taking pictures, Willy was accepted into the US Navy. After the war, as a veteran, Willy was eligible for U.S. citizenship and he was allowed to sponsor his mother's permanent residency in the United States."

Francis chuckled, "It all sounds so very complicated. Why all the secrecy?"

"It's all about diplomacy and propaganda. Certain underhanded things are kept secret. It's always best for governments to keep the common citizen ignorant of certain facts. Governments do their best to keep up good reputations. Also, this little matter about Bridget being a German citizen had to be cleared up. She wanted an annulment, but eventually she agreed to have a divorce on the grounds that her husband had abandoned her and he was a bigamist."

"What exactly is the difference between a divorce and an annulment?"

"To put it bluntly, you pay a lawyer in order to get divorced or you pay The Church for an annulment. However, a religious annulment, in most countries, is not legally recognised, so, in the end, you would need to pay The Church for an annulment, and then pay a lawyer to have the marriage legally dissolved. Basically, it is all

semantics and it ends up with the same outcome. It's just that with an annulment, The Church retains their authority, and makes a few bucks to boot."

"Oh, brother, what a joke. Tell me though, have you seen the two of them after the war?"

"No, I have not. Occasionally I'll get a visitor who brings me some news. This is how I found out Willy changed his name to Houston, got married, and had children. Alois Hitler had at least one more child with his second wife. As for Adolf, he could be living the good life in Argentina for all I know."

"What do you mean Argentina?"

"I'm just joking. There are rumours about Adolf fleeing to Argentina after the war, but I believe they are mostly unfounded. Although, I admit, it's possible he could have."

"Do you really think so?"

"I don't take it seriously. And, to be frank, I really don't care and I can't be bothered to find out."

"Could you find out?"

"Possibly, I don't know for certain. But, like I said, I can't be bothered."

"Should I question what you're saying? It sound quite farfetched."

"Of course Francis, didn't I tell you to question everything I say? Now, I want you to prove me wrong, if you can. I know you can't, because, I know what I'm talking

about, and if you like, I'll go the library and help you search microfilms. There was a big article in a nineteen-thirty-nine Look Magazine edition about Willy's lecture tours and his relationship with his uncle Adolf. It should be on microfilm. And while we are there, let's look up Charles' uncles."

"Okay, I'll take you up on that."

Mr. Kapusta continued, "Now you know why Mr. Sutton has seemed to be in such a slump recently. He could not bring himself to believe that Pierre Trudeau, a known 'scarper' and 'zombie', would ever be elected as our leader, a leader who will represent Canada throughout the World. Francis, I would like you to think back. Think about Mr. Goldstein and Mr. Lucki. Compare their stories, and Mr. Sutton's story, to Trudeau's story. Now think about Socrates, he stated that the only justice we have is, *Might is Right*. Think about that."

Francis remained silent for several minutes before commenting, "Well, Mr. Sutton has done alright for himself though. He is the owner of North-West Box and he drives a Packard."

"Francis, he doesn't personally own that Packard. It's a company car. I agree, he owns the company, so, in a way, he owns the car. It's a moot point."

Mr. Kapusta continued, "I'd better tell you the rest of the story. You see, when Cy Sutton came back to Winnipeg after the war, he began working at North-West Box. This company had been started up during the war. Investors, such as the Trudeau family, during the war, formed various companies in order to obtain government contracts to supply war needs. North-West Box was formed to supply cartons, mostly for the rag-trade. Factories in Winnipeg were making clothing, blankets,

gloves, and other necessities for the army, navy and air force. They needed boxes to ship these goods, and North-West supplied these boxes. When the war ended, the need for boxes came crashing down. It looked like North-West Box would be shut down. Rather than lose his job, Cy Sutton made a down payment on the company and took on a mortgage for the remainder. Because the demand for boxes collapsed, he got the company for a bargain basement price. Cy bought a building and equipment but he had nobody to sell his products to. Fortunately, most of his workers were women, who, when the war ended, quit their jobs as the men started to come back home. He ended up with just two employees, one of whom became his wife. Luckily though, mainly because he was an army veteran, patriotic companies began giving him some small contracts. He worked day and night to build up the business and he now appears to be sitting pretty."

"Well," Francis noted, "things didn't turn out so badly. Mr. Sutton is doing okay. Isn't he? Why do you say, he appears to be sitting pretty?"

"Have you ever wondered why Mr. Sutton has taken such an interest in you?"

"No. But, I would imagine it's because he is just a nice guy. He's seems to be interested in everyone's welfare."

Mr. Kapusta went on by explaining, "Mr. and Mrs. Sutton have no children. During the war Mr. Sutton was walking beside a soldier who stepped on a Bouncing Betty, and now Mr. Sutton is unable to have children."

"Bouncing Betty? What's a Bouncing Betty?"

"The Germans set out land mines which were spring loaded. When someone

stepped on one, this so called "Bouncing Betty" would shoot up a few feet, just about the height of an average man's crotch, before it exploded. The mine that Mr. Sutton's buddy stepped on sent shrapnel into Mr. Sutton's genitals, destroying them. He spent time in hospital but survived. However, he is unable to father any children. This is one reason why he has informally adopted you as a stepson."

Francis looked very perplexed, "I'm beginning to understand. But, with all of his adversity and anguish, Mr. Sutton doesn't seem embittered. I wasn't even aware he was upset over Trudeau becoming Prime Minister. He never once mentioned the election."

"You're right. He does keep his cool. However, you must realise it has a lot to do with his personal philosophies of life. He is a complete pacifist. Some might say he's a coward, since he refuses to fight."

"You're right. I have never seen him upset, even when some disaster happens at work. One time we had a big rush order and one of the machines broke down. It would be several days, if not weeks, to get the parts and repair the machine. Meantime he had a customer breathing down his neck. But, he never got the least bit upset. Or, at least, he never gave us the appearance of being upset."

"That's Cyril Sutton alright. But, you know, things always have a way of working out, despite his not getting upset. Truth be told, things seem to go much better doing things his way."

Mr. Kapusta rose and refilled the glasses. He was in deep thought and seemed to be doing things automatically, without thinking. After sitting back down, with his mind in the clouds, he paused for several minutes, before he continued to speak,

"Take for example, a few years back, before you began working for Mr. Sutton, a few of the employees joined a union and tried to unionise the shop. Cy Sutton is dead against unions. He sees them as setting up an adversarial relationship between employer and employee, much the same as setting up conditions for war. And, he was determined to keep full control of his company."

Francis asked, "So, what happened? We don't have a union."

"When these employees approached Cy and told him they wanted to unionise the shop, he asked them to tell him their reasons for wanting this. They replied that the other box companies in Winnipeg, which were unionised, had higher wages, as well as job security. Now, I know Cyril believes there is no such thing as security. He has stated on many occasions that the only security a person has is their ability to earn a living. To do this, someone needs to develop their talents and develop a strong belief in themselves."

"So, what happened?"

"What happened? I'll tell you what happened. Cyril told these union organisers, if the employees wished to have a union, he would not stand in their way. He suggested they bring him a copy of a union contract from one of the other box companies, and, if there were no clauses in the contract which he deemed grossly unfair, they could have the identical contract, including the same wages. This would make, as he suggested, negotiating very easy."

"But, we don't have a contract. As I said, we are not a unionised shop."

"That's correct, the employees decided they didn't want a union after all."

"What? Did Mr. Sutton agree to match the wages?"

"No, the wages at North-West Box are still less than the other companies."

Francis was indeed perplexed, "I don't understand."

"Well Francis, as you now know, in the first week of March of every year, beginning a few years after Mr. Sutton bought the company, each employee receives a cheque, which is normally forty to sixty percent of the employee's annual wages."

"Yes, I've been getting a cheque. And the money has always come in handy, especially since my father died."

Mr. Kapusta chuckled, "I'm certain you are aware that fifty percent of the company's profits are invested back into the business for maintenance and upgrades and a certain percentage of the remaining profits is divided equally amongst the employees. You see Francis, Mr. Sutton read the union contract very carefully before agreeing to go along with it. He stalled for several weeks, and then he told the union representatives to have the documents drawn up and he would sign them. However, the union representatives came back and requested to negotiate on a few things. Cy stated there was nothing to negotiate since they would be getting exactly the same contract which their competitor had, nothing would be altered."

Mr. Kapusta began to chuckle, "You see, the employees wanted to keep their existing benefits, such as sick time and the annual bonuses, but also get higher wages. Cy tried to explain that they could not have it both ways. They either accept the exact contract or keep things as they currently were. As these negotiations

continued, the first week of March came and went. The employees were perplexed. They had not been issued a bonus cheque as usual. They approached Mr. Sutton and asked about the bonus cheques. Mr. Sutton reminded the workers' delegation that they were now in the midst of forming a union shop, and, in the contract he was willing to sign, there was nothing about profit sharing. Rather than bonus cheques the employees would be getting a pay increase."

Francis exclaimed, "That seems to be underhanded!"

Mr. Kapusta answered back, "Francis! No, that was not underhanded. Mr. Sutton was revealing the facts of life to these workers. They could not have it both ways. They seemed to want their cake and eat it too. They were happy with higher wages, but they did not wish to lose their bonuses. The other companies did not issue bonus cheques, and Mr. Sutton was showing that they could have one or the other, but they could not have both. You see Mr. Sutton would not fight, but he would not so easily give in."

"I still think, rather than play games, he should have told them up front they would have no more bonuses."

"Francis! That would only have come to an argument. You see, he allowed them to make the decision, and they did, but not until he pointed out, if they wished to have bonuses, then they would need to accept the risk of a downturn in the economy. He asked the delegation if they would be willing to cover any losses if the company began to lose money."

"What do you mean, cover any losses?"

"Mr. Sutton pointed out, if they lost some of their contracts to make boxes, the company may start to lose money; especially if they did not lay off any employees when things slowed down. If this happened, there would be no bonuses, and he asked the employees if they would be willing to cover any losses by accepting lay-offs or wage cuts? Mr. Sutton reminded his employees, whenever there were slow times with other box companies, some of the employees were laid off, and North-West had never laid anyone off. Employees were kept on even if it meant they were assigned other work, such as painting, or helping out in the maintenance department."

Francis was still a little perplexed. He asked, "Has the company ever lost money?"

"In the beginning, the company did lose money, and Mr. Sutton had to borrow money to cover these losses. However, once the company began making a profit, Mr. Sutton was quite willing to share the profits with his employees, since, the way Mr. Sutton viewed it, without his employees' efforts, there would be no profits."

Francis showed he was still not convinced by stating, "It still sounds a bit sneaky to me. I'm certain, if Mr. Sutton had just explained things in the beginning, something could have been worked out."

"Well Francis, I don't know if you're aware but there was a bit more to the story. And you may find this part unfair, but, I for one, think Mr. Sutton played his cards well. He has always been very just and fair. You see, after Mr. Sutton had carefully read his copy of the union agreement, he sent out a few letters informing the people who were receiving monthly cheques from the company that, because the company was being unionised, their cheques would be discontinued, since this

practice would not be part of the union contract."

"Who was receiving cheques?"

"Mr. Sutton uses part of the company profits to finance a little wage retention plan that he has set up. If an employee is sick, their wages continue. Also, if a woman goes off due to pregnancy, she continues to receive her full wages until the baby is weaned, and is old enough to have someone, other than the mother, look after it. Also, when an employee retires, they receive, as a pension, one and one-half percent of their wages for each year they were employed at the box company. If a person retires after thirty years of service, until both they and their spouse die, they, or their spouse, will receive forty-five percent of their wages. However, this pension plan is not cut in stone, Cy set it up with nothing in writing and no commitments. And, none of the other box companies had a sick plan nor a pension plan. When people started receiving these letters they raised a stink. The embarrassed employees who tried to unionise the shop, soon backtracked, and everything went back to the way it was."

§

FRANCIS AS A MENTOR

Mr. Kapusta placed another log on the fire, refilled the glasses, and sat back down on his comfortable wing chair, before continuing with their conversation. He began by stating, "I had better speak to you about Daniel Meadows, the friend I was telling you about who worked with me at the Vatican."

Francis easily agreed, "Certainly. I'd love to hear about this man. I'm very curious."

"Daniel Meadows has contacted me. He is coming to Winnipeg for a visit. While working in the Vatican, we became very good friends, and it was Daniel's influence that prompted me to admit to myself that there was much duplicity and hypocrisy in The Church. And through him, I began understanding the psychology of The Church. In order to understand this psychology, a person needs an understanding of many other subjects, such as biology, physiology, and how animals, especially human beings, operate, mentally and physically."

"We were both working in the Vatican library together. I was employed there but I was also doing research for my thesis. I was studying the life of the Flavians who commissioned the New Testament to be written. They developed an elaborate plan, with the help of Josephus, the Jewish turncoat and historian, to modify the religion which evolved after the Caesars began declaring themselves to be gods and therefore infallible, just as the reigning Pope of today is infallible."

Mr. Kapusta smiled and went on with his story, "Because all the Caesars are mortal and they eventually die, a new Caesar has to be named. Each time there is a new emperor, the Roman Senate must be asked to have the new emperor declared a

god. The new ingenious scheme was to have The Roman Senate agree that whoever held the title of office as head of the Roman Empire would automatically become a god. This would save a lot of time and red tape."

Mr. Kapusta continued with his story, "Because Caesar is a family name as well as a title of office, when the Flavians took over as emperors, it was necessary for them to choose an alternate title. Since Caesar literally means father, the new title eventually changed to Pope which also literally means father. All it took was to use the same title but in a different language. It all sounds complicated but it is actually quite simple. You have to remember, with the change from Caesar to Pope, The Pope is not literally deemed a god. However, The Pope is accepted to be infallible and we all know that infallible beings are gods. A rose by any other name, Francis."

"We now come to the New Testament, which was formed by order of the Roman Emperor Constantine in the year three-twenty-five. Constantine brought together a group of bishops to pick out stories from a collection of Christian writings to include in this new bible. The word bible literally means a collection of stories. The name of the real Jesus Christ was omitted and only the title was left in. The idea was that all Roman Emperors would assume the title, Jesus Christ. However, over time, people began believing that Jesus Christ was an actual miraculously born living man who had nothing to do with Roman Emperors. The Pope is deemed to represent Jesus Christ on earth, he speaks directly to God, and he is infallible. In essence, he is a god."

"Is this all true?"

"Francis, I told you never to believe a word I say to you. I want you to go and find

out for yourself. However, I am not telling you fibs. Everything I'm telling you came right out of the Vatican archives. And, if you look for them, you will find books which confirm what I'm saying."

"Now, when I was studying the different Popes, I found a good deal of information on the Borgia family. Have you heard of them?"

"No, I have not."

"If you read the history of the Vatican, either in the Vatican library or history written by laymen, what you read would probably remind you of what we imagine to be the modern day Mafia. At the least, you will see just as much decadence and deceit as we find in Shakespeare's plays. The Borgia family turned out to be my favourite family to study, and The Pope, Rodrigo Borgia, who was crowned Alexander VI, was, I believe the most interesting pope of all. He came across as what we deem to be a saint but he was pure evil. Supposedly celibate, he had many mistresses, hosted orgies which were referred to as garden parties, and he fathered many bastards. His son, Cesare, was mentioned in Chapter Seven of Machiavelli's book, *The Prince*. It details how Cesare had no remorse for killing not only his enemies, but even friends who had done him a good turn. How many devout Catholics would read histories of the Vatican? They would be threatened with excommunication if they ever discussed anything about the corrupt side of the Vatican. However, these histories may open their eyes."

Mr. Kapusta paused before he continued, "These Catholic people, how many do any research into their religion. Take, for example, The Holy Crusades, most Catholics have at least heard of these crusades which had the mission to conquer

heathens in The Holy Lands, but how many are aware that these crusades happened also in Europe? In the early thirteenth century, Pope Innocent III ordered a crusade in the south of France to rid the country of Cathars."

"Who are Cathars?"

"The Cathars practised a religion which was not much different than the Catholics. Their religion was mixed with ideas from many religions. The Pope saw them as a threat to his authority, and he ordered them to be wiped out. There were a few Cathars living in the city of Béziers in southwestern France. When The Crusaders captured this city, they slaughtered every man, woman, and child, most of them Catholic, who lived in that city. The town was then pillaged and all valuables were taken as booty. After this, the city was burned to the ground. This was a warning to any other town which thought they would like to harbour a few Cathars. Of course, this is only one example, there are plenty more detailed in the Vatican archives. The question I have is this, were the Cathars just an excuse to seize lands and goods from others? I believe it was, because, these Holy Crusaders captured and destroyed many cities in Southern France, resulting in millions of men, women and children being brutally slaughtered. They spared nobody."

Francis sighed, "This is way too much information at once. I need to think."

"One thing you must do, Francis, is to do your research. Part of your research must be to translate what you are reading into English. For example, what is the true definition of gospel? Look it up, it literally means, *good news of a military victory*. Many sources will tell you it means good news, but they won't tell you what kind of good news it refers to. These sources let people assume it is good

news about Jesus Christ coming to save the world. It is not."

"It all sounds like subterfuge and deception."

"Well Francis, if it looks like a dog, barks like a dog, and wags its tale like a dog; would you agree it probably is a dog?"

Francis laughed and Mr. Kapusta continued, "The original New Testament was all written in Greek. Jesus Christ, literally translated into English, is Saviour Messiah. This is a title, not a name, and the Roman Emperors presented themselves to the common people as their saviour, their messiah."

"How do you know all this?"

"It is all explained in Josephus' writings. However, it was written in a type of code. If a person is familiar with all of Josephus' writings, the code is quite simple, but most readers do not read all of his writings. They are only familiar with just one of his books, which, for most people, would be The New Testament. And, nobody bothers to look for the true translation of titles and words. For example Jesus' mother is Mary, but Mary literally means rebel, someone who rebels. What is she rebelling against and did she have a name? We are never told, but if you read other books from this era you would come up with some possibilities which you might accept as conceivable truths."

Francis simply stated, "I think I'll leave the research up to you and just take your word. I trust your honesty and I have other things on my mind which I feel are more important than The Church and The Pope."

Mr. Kapusta laughed, "Just remember, the Roman Emperors invented Christianity

because they accepted the advice given by others, such as the Roman philosopher, Seneca, who summed it up by teaching, *religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by rulers as useful*. Five-hundred years ago the Borgia family took over The Pope's throne. They became so ruthless and powerful that, even today, many Catholics pray to this family as if they were gods. This family resurrected the title of Caesar and ruled for generations. "Cesare Borgia, a fifteenth century Roman Catholic cardinal and a son of Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia) stated, *it has served us well, this myth of Jesus*. You see Francis, these Popes use Christianity as a tool to rule over people, who are referred to as their sheep."

Francis questioned, "What you are really telling me is that all of The Bible is fiction?"

"Northrop Frye tells his students, if any part of The Bible can be shown to be true history, it is only there by accident. The Bible, in his opinion is a work of fiction and he teaches The Bible as literature. He does not teach it as theology."

"Who's Northrop Frye?"

"Northrop Frye, in Canada, should be a household name, but, although, throughout the world, he's a famous lecturer, he is little known in his own country. He lectures at the University of Toronto and his classes are in great demand. However, his ideas, just like the ideas of other people who show that The Bible is nothing but a collection of fairy-tales, are passively censored. As Northrop Frye points out, the word bible literally means a collection of stories, a collection of myths."

"Are you serious? I have never heard of Northrop Frye."

Mr. Kapusta laughed, "And you probably have never heard of Alvin Boyd Kuhn and Gerald Massey either. These men should be well known, and they would be if what they have written was acceptable to Christian churches. They have all proven that The Bible is a collection of fairy-tales. They have done this by reading and translating ancient literature which was originally written in one of several languages, Egyptian hieroglyphics, Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic."

"Well, it looks like I've got a long reading list. Where do I find these books?"

"I will get them for you. Meanwhile, let's forget Frye and I'll carry on with my story. Daniel and I worked a little over two years together before he left the Vatican and went to London, England, and then to Canada. It was when I came to Canada that we re-connected. We've been corresponding ever since."

Mr. Kapusta continued with his tale, "Daniel told me he had stayed with Michael, a former classmate of his, while he was in London. Michael was very blunt with Daniel, telling him, if he felt The Church is so oppressive, why should he stay? Michael advised him to initiate a change, because it was plain he was burnt out, and needed a long rest. He suggested for Daniel to get a job as a manual labourer doing mindless work. Daniel believed he could never leave The Church since his only qualification was a master's degree in theology. He wasn't qualified to do any other job and, with his lily white and well-manicured hands, other than use a pen, he could not do physical labour. He admitted his work was enjoyable, and his limited duties gave him plenty of time to do research and write papers."

At this point Francis interrupted, "Is that what you did, get a mindless job when

you went to work at the railway?"

Mr. Kapusta thoughtfully agreed, "I suppose I did. But let's get on with the story. Now, where was I? Oh yes, as I was telling you, Daniel, looking down at his lily-white hands, with manicured nails, and smooth, girlish skin, stated he had never done any manual labour in his life. Because he was a scholar, who read Latin, Hebrew, and Ancient Greek, and could also quote obscure texts; but, other than holding a pen or pencil, he had done nothing with his hands. Even at school, he was exempt from sports, because he had a nervous disposition."

Mr. Kapusta continued, "Now, we get to the reason Daniel wished to see Michael. It was to discuss the abuse they had suffered at boarding school, particularly the severe canings from a sadistic master by the name of Father Saint-Maurice. Daniel had suppressed these memories, and, as they started to surface from his subconscious, he wanted someone to verify that they really had happened and they were not dreams. Daniel described how, when he was probably seven years old, he had been perplexed when Father Metallier had sent him to the office. He was certain he did nothing wrong. However, Father Metallier slammed his wooden ruler down on his desk and ordered Daniel to go see Father Saint-Maurice, who, when Daniel stepped into his office, looked down at Daniel with a stern look of authority. Father Saint-Maurice did not ask why he was there; he simply ordered Daniel to drop his drawers. Daniel had no idea what the priest meant, so he just stiffly and mutely stood looking up into the priest's downturned face. To Daniel, Father Saint-Maurice seemed a mile tall. His fat, ruddy face, with lifeless, pig like, blood shot eyes, peered down like two hot embers of coal. The little boy was terrified. Before Daniel knew what was happening, the priest twisted Daniel

around and yanked his trousers and undergarment down to the floor. He then bent Daniel over his desk and slammed his face down. As he held Daniel's head with one hand, he severely caned him with the other, while he counted, *one and two for being naughty, and three, four, five, six for tardiness in dropping your drawers*. Daniel soon learned, when Father Saint-Maurice ordered him to *drop them*, he needed to drop his pants and drawers as fast as he could and quickly lay his face down on the priest's desk. Daniel, before this, had never been caned or hit in any manner. He didn't even know what a cane was. He described Father Saint-Maurice's cane as being slim and flexible, and, when it connected, it stung, leaving welts which eventually swelled to a quarter of an inch above the flesh."

Mr. Kapusta paused. Francis did not comment, and Mr. Kapusta continued, "Daniel had thought he had erased these memories from his mind, but, for some reason, they started coming back to him. He told me how he was relieved when the canings ended, but, he felt very guilty about what the canings were replaced with. All of these memories had been pushed to the back of his brain, where they fermented, and remained undetected for years. As a boy of eight or nine, Daniel knew nothing about sex; he was an innocent child. Daniel, when he spoke to me, began to weep uncontrollably as he recalled this little boy, who wasn't allowed to cry, who wasn't allowed to show any emotion, and had tears bottled up for many, many years. Daniel, as he opened up to me, came to understand, it was all a game, a game of control."

"Daniel described how, for some small misdemeanor, he was sent to Father Saint-Maurice's office. When he was told to drop them, quick as he could, he whipped down his garments and slapped his face onto the desk and, clenching his fists while

squeezing his eyes shut, he waited for the usual caning. But, before he knew what was happening, something slipped into him. He described it as a feeling similar to Sister Florentine giving him an enema. His first impression was that the priest must be also giving him an enema, but the syringe felt different. He remembered it as not being very painful. He came to realise that the priest must have used a lubricant. He remembered something entering him very quickly, and before he knew it, it was all over. The priest then told him to pull up his pants and go back to class. At the time, Daniel did not understand what had happened. He described to me the shame which he carried, and how he had buried his memories for years."

"I told Daniel, because he had been a defenceless little boy, he was a victim, and he need not feel any shame. Daniel told me that Michael was a homosexual and paedophile who became tangled up with Jimmy Savile, a sadist and paedophile who hob-knobs with royalty and people in high places. Daniel wondered if Michael had adopted his oppressors' behaviour in order to be part of the group who had power. He wondered if it was because Michael couldn't beat them, he ended up joining them."

"Daniel came to understand that these paedophiles protect each other and this clique has powerful people in their midst who keep everyone's crimes under wraps. Daniel estimates, more than ninety percent of Catholic priests are perverts and most are paedophiles."

Francis interrupted, "I don't want to seem impertinent but ... are you speaking about yourself? Are you Daniel Meadows?"

Mr. Kapusta opened his mouth, but hesitated to speak. He searched Francis' face.

Finally, he spoke, "No Francis, I am not Daniel Meadows. But, I have my own stories and I have been Daniel's mentor. I am older than him."

Mr. Kapusta continued, "Daniel believed that Michael was able to accept the abuse and get on in life since he could live as he pleases. Michael had no worries when he had left the priesthood because his parents' legacy gave him a substantial monthly allowance, while Daniel, having no money, needed to work in order to live."

"Michael told Daniel, what happened to them also happened to most of the boys at the school. It would start with canings and progress to sodomy. It was as if Father Saint-Maurice played, first the bad cop role, and then switched to a kinder, gentler, good cop role. Daniel quoted Niccolo Machiavelli, *Men, when they receive good from whence they expect evil, feel the more indebted to their benefactor*. Is this why he felt grateful to Father Saint-Maurice for not caning him, and the sodomy became almost like a pleasant treat. This could be, because, Daniel told me he could actually feel the physical pain of the canings, as well as the pleasant relief when he was sodomised and not caned."

Mr. Kapusta changed the subject, "Let me tell you a bit about myself. I am living under a false name. I was born in Galicia as Pyotr Koperowski. My parents anglicized my name when they sent me to England to be educated. I became Peter Cooper. Dmytro Kapusta was someone I knew. He disappeared during the war, and was presumed dead. I assumed his identity. It was a way to make Peter Cooper disappear in order for me to start a fresh life. I've been keeping my story a secret but I'm now telling it to you, in the hope it will give you a better understanding of this world."

"So, you are a priest?"

"I was educated as a priest, but I was never ordained, so I have never performed mass. I was not studying to be a Roman Catholic priest, I would have been an Orthodox priest."

"Orthodox?"

"Yes, there are many Orthodox churches which Rome would like to bring under the Pope's rule. However, these churches wish to keep their autonomy. Most though, have come to a working agreement with The Vatican. Many Orthodox priests have a wife and children. This would not be permitted if they were fully under the Pope's authority. However, unofficially, we are aware, some Roman Catholic priests have married in secrecy, and continue working as priests."

When Francis did not comment, and a few minutes of silence went by, Mr. Kapusta continued, "If you like Francis, you may call me Peter, which is my given name. You're a man now, you no longer need to be deferential towards me."

Francis hesitated before he answered, "If I call you Peter, and get used to it, I may blurt it out sometime when other people are around."

"Yes, you're right. Call me Matt then, short for Dmytro."

Francis looked at his watch, "I think I better go home. It's late."

"Yes, yes, Francis, we're both tired. It's been a long day and I'm beat. If you like, come again next Saturday afternoon. We'll make supper together and I'll resume my story."

Francis hesitated, and Mr. Kapusta gave an explanation, "It would be for my benefit Francis. I've never told anyone my story, and it does me good to voice it. Come, it'll be therapy for me, and I know I can trust you Francis."

Francis smiled, "Okay, I'll come."

When Francis crawled into his bed, he thought about the irony of his situation. Mr. Kapusta had always been his mentor and advisor, and now he would be Mr. Kapusta's therapist. It all seemed so ironic, but Francis, thinking about how much he had grown and matured in the last four years, realised he was now in a position to be a listener. He had the self-discipline to listen without commenting. How could he comment, he neither had the experience, nor the education to comment. But, he had learned how to listen, and possibly empathise. As he was falling into a deep sleep he was reviewing Mr. Kapusta's story in his mind's eye.



MARGARET'S DILEMA

Margaret could not sleep. Night after night she tossed and turned but sleep would not come. She felt as if she was going to have a nervous breakdown. At work, she confided to Donna how she had ostracised Francis.

Donna was not sympathetic, "You are giving up the one good thing in your life. And for what? You are giving up Francis because of fear. You are afraid of The Church and their threat of sending you to Hell. They've really got a hold on you, and you are clutching back in return. Give it all up. Can't you see, Francis, as an atheist, is content and happy, while you, holding onto your false promises and threats, are miserable? Can't you see, you are sending your girls to the slaughter? What happened to you could happen to them. Do you want history to repeat itself?"

Margaret believed Donna to be right, but, as she explained to Donna, "I still have this gnawing fear, what if The Church is right, what if there really is a Hell, I would be condemned to go to Hell?"

Margaret knew this was why she was so upset about Frances telling her girls there was no God. Now that she understood what was going on, how could she believe in God anymore? Yet, she could not bring herself to declare there is no God and no Hell. Logically it made no sense, but inwardly, she was afraid she was wrong. Was it the cheap insurance? Is that what she was looking for?

Margaret put it to Donna, "It doesn't cost anything to keep your faith and, if The Church is right, and there is a God, a Heaven and a Hell, it's insurance, insurance which costs nothing."

"Margaret, you pay dearly for that insurance. You pay with your life. Don't you understand that? You have a choice, your faith, or your happiness. You cannot have both. You cannot have it both ways."

Margaret started to cry and Donna sat in silence. Eventually Margaret calmed down and Donna made a suggestion, "Maybe you should talk to Francis' friend, Mr. Kapusta. Maybe he can help you; give you some advice? I haven't met him, but, by what you have told me, he must be a worldly man, and you stated that he has been a great friend to Francis."

"Mr. Kapusta? I'm not sure. I really don't know him that well."

"He's Francis' friend, and going by the way you described him, he isn't going to condemn you. I think he might be a big help. Just the fact you'll have someone to talk to, someone who may show a bit of empathy. It can't hurt. And, maybe he can be a go between for you and Francis."

"Donna, I'll go if you agree to come with me. I feel uncomfortable seeing him alone."

Donna hesitated. She did not want to see Mr. Kapusta, but, she understood why Margaret would not want to see him by herself. Donna had the same fear, she had no desire to be alone with any man in his private quarters. Reluctantly, she agreed, "Okay, you set up a time and I'll go with you."

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On Saturday morning, Margaret and Donna went to Mr. Kapusta's house. Francis

was away at one of his classes, and Mr. Kapusta assured the two ladies, they would not be disturbed.

Mr. Kapusta had tea ready when the two ladies arrived. He greeted them cordially and the three chit-chatted about various things while eating the cakes Mr. Kapusta served.

It was Mr. Kapusta who started the conversation. He addressed Margaret, "I understand you, as well as your girls, will not be visiting Mrs. Humphrey anymore. I would imagine she is very disappointed."

Margaret answered, "Francis and I have had a little disagreement. I don't know how much he told you but we haven't been seeing each other."

"It's because he's an atheist. Is that not right?"

Now that she was thinking about it, and she was about to discuss it; she realised it all was beginning to sound rather foolish, but she gave her explanation, "I know Francis has a point. But, what if The Church is right? What if there really is a Hell?"

Mr. Kapusta answered, "I can clearly see that you are reluctant to give The Church up. That is understandable, and I know it is impossible for me to make you think the same as me. The only thing I can do is tell my story. You are the only one who can decide for you. Nobody else can."

Mr. Kapusta turned to Donna, "And how about you. What's your thoughts?"

"I side with Francis. I have given religion up a long time ago. However, like you, I realise, everybody has to decide for themselves. And, that is one of the issues. I

think Olivia and Alice must decide for themselves, they should not be forced into religion. Personally, I think they should not be exposed to any more religion until they are twenty-one, old enough to decide for themselves."

Margaret blurted out, "I don't agree. What if they make a mistake?"

Donna turned to Mr. Kapusta, "I don't think we can come to any agreement. We think differently than Margaret."

Mr. Kapusta changed courses, "Margaret, I have spoken to your mother. She and I have discussed Daniel Meadows and I think he may be of some help when he comes to Winnipeg. Your mother told me a few things."

Margaret became belligerent, "You've been talking behind my back!"

"I suppose we have. When Francis told me what was happening, I intervened by calling on your mother. I only had one side of the story and, even though I'm usually not one to interfere, I look upon Francis as a son, and like you with your two daughters, I have Francis' best interests in mind. I believe that I am compelled to get involved."

Margaret did not comment and Mr. Kapusta continued, "I don't know if your mother has discussed this with you. She has confided in me that she is an atheist, but, a closeted atheist. She keeps this to herself."

Margaret was about to argue, but, she wondered, was Mr. Kapusta being honest? Was her mother an atheist? They never discussed religion. However, as far back as she could recall, she couldn't ever remember her mother going to church. It was always just her and her siblings who attended mass.

Mr. Kapusta got up, "I have something to show you."

He left the room and came back with some official looking documents, "I've been gathering up a few things for a friend of mine. He asked for information and I am providing it. I want to show you some official Vatican correspondence. This document, or a similar one, has been widely circulated. It is just one of many similar documents which parishioners would ignore if they ever came across one of them. These are instructions on how to handle cases of paedophilia and perversion in the parishes. Read for yourself, beginning here:

First: Make sure to use euphemisms rather than real words to describe any sexual assaults in diocese documents. Rather than using a term such as 'rape'; say 'inappropriate contact' or 'boundary issues'.

Second: Don't conduct genuine investigations with properly trained personnel. Instead, assign fellow clergy members to ask inadequate questions and then make credibility determinations about the colleagues with whom the accuser lives with and works with.

Third: For an appearance of integrity, send priests for 'evaluation' at church-run psychiatric treatment centres. Allow these experts to 'diagnose' whether the priest is a paedophile, based largely on the priest's 'self-reports,' and regardless of whether the priest had actually engaged in sexual contact with a child.

Fourth: When a priest does have to be removed, don't say why. Tell his parishioners that he is on 'sick leave,' or suffering from 'nervous exhaustion'. Or say nothing at all.

Fifth: Even if a priest is 'engaging inappropriately' with children, keep up appearances by continuing to provide him with housing and living expenses, even if there is a risk he may be using these resources to facilitate more inappropriate behaviour.

Sixth: If a transgressor's conduct becomes known to the community,

don't remove him from the priesthood. Transfer him to a new location where he is unknown.

Seventh: If necessary, use the threat of excommunication. Remind everyone, excommunication is the worst punishment, because anyone excommunicated will spend eternity in Hell.

Finally: Keep everything a secret from the police. Child sexual abuse, even short of actual penetration, is and has for all relevant times been a crime. But don't treat it that way; handle it like a personnel matter, 'in house'. If the police do get involved, contact your superiors. Our legal team will explain to the police that it is best for us to handle these types of problems internally.

Mr. Kapusta was not finished. He disclosed an official letter written and signed by a bishop of The Church. Mr. Kapusta explained, "In this incident, a priest raped a girl, an underage girl. The priest got this girl pregnant, and then he arranged an abortion, which the girl went through with. The girl's aunt made a formal complaint to the police which went nowhere. The Church's legal team had spoken to the police about their internal investigation and this rapist was transferred to another parish. He was never charged with any crimes. Things eventually died down. This priest's bishop expressed his feelings in a letter, you may read this part: ***'This is a very difficult time in your life, and I realize how upset you are. I too share your grief.'*** Doesn't this bishop sound very sympathetic?"

Mr. Kapusta then stressed the fact, "This letter was not sent to the girl, nor to the girl's family. It was addressed to the rapist. This bishop was consoling the rapist, the paedophile. Nobody affiliated with The Church ever communicated with the victim, nor with the victim's family. She was discarded and forgotten like a used bubble gum wrapper. This is a clear example of the corruption in The Church. Now you should understand why I refer to all of them as devils."

Mr. Kapusta continued, "I am showing you just one of many examples I have found. What has been my punishment for the things I am doing? I have been excommunicated and I remain in hiding under an assumed name. I'm not suggesting that The Church is planning to *snuff me out*. However, I think it's best for me to be living a secret life. You know as well as I do, some people may be fanatical enough about religion to make my life a hell on earth. Why, because their inner doubts force them to bully me in order to try to convince themselves that they have faith."

"Now, you know a little about this corrupt institution. Their corruption is not secret. History books reveal everything, but few Catholics dare to read history. They are afraid of excommunication, in their minds, the worst kind of punishment. They can't help but believe that they would be banished to Hell for eternity if they did not believe. They are ruled by fear, and, the joke is, what they are afraid of DOES NOT EXIST. You know what they must do? They must not fight, they must walk away, just walk away, and live, and enjoy the life we are all blessed with. And that is my advice to you, Margaret, and to everyone. Just walk away."

Margaret was not convinced, "What if you are wrong?"

"Well Margaret, why don't we just drop it for now? We can sleep on it and maybe we'll get together again. Just think about what we have discussed. Think about what I have just shown you and ask yourself if these bishops and other Church clergy actually believe there is a Heaven and a Hell. Would they be doing the things they are doing if they believed? Then, ask yourself if you can justify subjecting your girls to this."

Mr. Kapusta had one last question for Margaret, "Has your mother told you about her relationship with Daniel Meadows?"

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Margaret's mother, to her daughter, had never mentioned she had a visit from Mr. Kapusta and that she, a few days later, had gone to Mr. Kapusta's house.

The first time Mrs. Simpson was in Mr. Kapusta's living room, she smiled, "I thought I could never be comfortable with coming out of the closet. But now, I don't care who knows that I'm an atheist. They can all think and say what they please. I just don't care anymore."

Mr. Kapusta appeared very happy as he commented, "We have been so indoctrinated. Most people, even if they give it all up and are convinced they have no belief in God, will still feel very uncomfortable admitting to being an atheist. The Church has done a remarkably good job of brainwashing us all."

Mrs. Simpson asked, "Is it true, Christianity was an invention of Roman Emperors? Daniel Meadows told me that."

"Oh yes Suzanne, it's true. I would like to share a few things with you. I have several books on this subject if you care to borrow them. These books can be very dry reading. Certain scholars such as Gerald Massey have translated a lot of old documents, some over five-thousand years old. You will see the same myths over and over again throughout history."

"Do you think I should read these books?"

"Of course you should. All of these books are banned by The Church, but I firmly believe everyone should read them. If they don't get both sides of a story, how will they decide what the truth is?"

"I will borrow them. Do you trust me with your books?"

"Certainly I do."

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Margaret knew she needed to speak to her mother. She wanted to tell her about how she had reacted to Francis. First, she needed to explain the Tooth-Fairy and about Francis being an atheist and how she still feared going to Hell, even though religion did not make sense. Why couldn't she convince herself that The Church could be wrong? She kept on thinking, possibly she was wrong, and The Church was right.

She planned to begin by telling her mother about Francis being an atheist. But, instead, in order to ease into her story, she began by telling her mother about the Lee family. She described how they were atheists. As true Buddhists, they had no god.

Mrs. Simpson quietly took all this information in before replying, "I think I would prefer to be a Buddhist with no god, than a Catholic with hypocritical priests. At my late age, I'm beginning to accept there is no Heaven and no Hell. We make our own heaven and hell, right here on earth, by the way we live."

Margaret was shocked at her mother's revelations despite of what Mr. Kapusta

had told her.

Mrs. Simpson went on to reveal to her daughter how she had lost faith in her religion and also in The Bible. "I can no longer believe. Too much has happened for me to go back to being a slave to religion."

After a short silence, Mrs. Simpson changed the subject, "Olivia and Alice told me they are not allowed to see Francis, nor his mother. Is that true?"

"Yes Mother, it is true. Francis admitted to me, not only is he critical of The Church, he took away my two daughters' innocence by telling them that there is no Tooth-Fairy. Alice was very upset. I've been getting the feeling that Francis might be a disciple of The Devil. How, if that is the case, with a clear conscious, could I allow him to be around my daughters?"

"Margaret, aren't you being a bit hasty? Possibly, you should think about this? The Lee's have admitted to not believing in God. Do you plan on keeping Susan away from the girls?"

Margaret was nearly in tears, "I don't know, I don't know what to do anymore." She was greatly shocked about her mother being so sympathetic towards the Lee family. But having her mother admit to being an atheist gave Margaret the encouragement to open up and reveal her own doubts, "I have come to understand, much of my anger with Francis is really anger at myself. Francis has the courage to walk away and I don't. I still have this fear of punishment from The Church, and from God. I can renounce The Church, but, how can I renounce God?"

"Margaret, I know a priest was abusing you. I saw the signs and I did nothing. I was

afraid. I realise I could have prevented it. Today I would. I have come to realise it's all a sham. There is no God."

"You knew? You knew about me? How did you know?"

"I saw the signs. It happened to me, and history has repeated itself. It is all my fault."

"Mother, what are you talking about, history has repeated itself?"

"Margaret, I think I had better tell you my story. Through a kindly man, I have come to realise there is no God. Like Francis, I have become an atheist. But, unlike Francis, I have been afraid to acknowledge this fact. I have been afraid of peoples' reactions."

"Mr. Kapusta told me you were an atheist. It's true then."

"Yes, I have been for many years. I'm no different than you. I have the same doubts. I was so indoctrinated by The Church that, even today, at the back of mind, even though I know it is not true, I wonder, if, maybe, maybe there is a god. Rationally though, like I have done with the story of Santa Claus, I tell myself it does not make any sense to have a belief in a god. I know, I have heard the arguments, I cannot prove or disprove the theory that God exists. Also, I'm afraid it's all happened again. I was abused and you were too. But, despite this, I have allowed my granddaughters to be baptized and I am now allowing them to be indoctrinated into The Church. I am opening the door to allow them to be abused. Why, why am I doing this? I am ashamed. And, I am so relieved it has finally come out. I feel free, I finally feel free, and I will not allow this to happen to another

generation."

Mrs. Simpson took a deep breath and continued, "Because of what happened to me, you never saw me going to church or having anything to do with religion. I have even avoided funerals because I would have to attend Holy Mass. You don't know what it's like to be ostracized. Except for Aunt Fanny, our family lives in fear, fear of the priests, fear of The Church, fear of a fictional god, fear of purgatory, and fear of Hell. Fear drives us. A kindly priest opened my eyes to The Church and now, finally, I have accepted that there is no God and everything The Church teaches is a lie. I am now free. There shall be no more secrets and lies."

Mrs. Simpson continued, "You were just a little girl and your brother was a baby when it all began. We had been living here, on Dalton, for just a short while. Despite the troubles The Church had inflicted on me, I was still stubbornly holding on to my beliefs. Did I really believe, or was I afraid to not believe? Was I still clutching at straws? I don't know. There was a new priest. He was so different. I believed he really cared, and I still believe this. Unlike the perverts and paedophiles I had encountered, this priest, I don't think would intentionally do any harm. He had no faith whatever in The Church. Eventually he was sent east and I heard rumours about him being defrocked and excommunicated for his rebellious actions. I thank him for opening my eyes and giving me the support I needed in order to have the courage to drop my faith."

Margaret saw her mother in a new light, "You never spoke about this. Why haven't you told me?"

"I don't know. Shortly after I noticed the signs, you got married and you moved

away. When you came back and got divorced, I just shut my mouth and hoped for the best. I know I was being a coward. What would the neighbours say if they knew I was an atheist? Fear, it was fear, fear of being ridiculed, fear of being ostracised, fear of being called names, it was all fear. Also, I was afraid of your father. I couldn't stand up to him. He would not allow me to shame him by announcing I'm an atheist, even though he had nothing to do with religion. Was he a closet atheist? I think he was. But, he would never admit it. He had his pride. And he had to be the boss. I was too weak to fight. And now, now I am ashamed of myself. I cannot make any excuses."

Mrs. Simpson then told Margaret her story, and when she finished her tale, Mrs. Simpson looked into her daughter's eyes. "Can you forgive me? Can you find it in your heart to forgive me?"

Margaret smiled through her tears, "Yes mother, I forgive you. I have been stupid, so stupid. I'm the one who needs forgiving."



SUZANNE'S STORY

Margaret, after her mother's revelations, went to her room with her head spinning. She lay in bed, mulling over what her mother had revealed to her. Like a movie, the story ran through her mind, over and over again, from beginning to end, and then starting over again. Now that she knew what her mother had gone through, she not only forgave her, she understood her.

As she reflected back to when her mother's tale began, Margaret could picture her mother like she remembered her from when Margaret was just a toddler. She saw her mother trudging through the snow on her way to church. It was a Sunday morning, before the others rose from their beds. Few people would get up for the early six-thirty mass, just a few old widows who had nothing to their lives, except religion.

Her mother was not aware that a new priest would be in the confessional. Not that this was unusual, priests would come and go in her parish. She had heard that Father Beauchemin had, in the middle of the night, left without any goodbyes. The surprise was, he did not leave sooner, when there was all that gossip about him. It seemed to come to a head when Sylvia had to go away. People knew she was pregnant.

Her mother had been thinking back to another priest, Father O'Hare, who always called her by her first name, Suzanne. This priest had also disappeared during the night, so many long years before. People whispered he could not get out of town fast enough. Suzanne never heard from him again. She wondered if he ever thought about her. When they were together, alone, in his private chambers, he

often told her how she was so important to him. She thought about Aunt Fanny taking her to Winnipeg to make a formal complaint to the police. Aunt Fanny had demanded the police take Suzanne's statement which they were reluctant to do. She thought back to that day. It seemed like an eternity ago. So much had happened since then.

The policeman had asked her if she had enjoyed it. Why would he ask her that? She could not admit it to him, but of course, she had enjoyed it when she was receiving attention and what she thought was love. But, when the penetration began, she had turned herself off; she had turned off her feelings. How could this policeman understand that Jesus had come to her through Father O'Hare? It was Jesus who had impregnated her. She knew this policeman could never understand. She knew he, and the others, would make her feel dirty and wicked.

She had been surprised and apprehensive when her father arrived at the police station to '*rescue her*'. She expected to have a good beating when they got back home. It never happened. In a few days, her father took her back to Winnipeg, where she stayed in a home for unwed mothers until the baby was born. She was surprised, but grateful, that Jeannette and Beatrice, two girls from her home town, were also there. After the baby was born, she never saw those two friends again. Rumours were that Jeannette was living with relatives in Quebec, and Beatrice was staying somewhere in Winnipeg.

Suzanne never saw the baby. After, when she awoke, with Sister Florence hovering over her, she asked to see it. She asked if it was a boy. Nobody would answer her questions, and when she returned home, it was a forbidden topic. It was as if it had never happened. All of it had been erased from history and never mentioned.

One night, she was aroused from her sleep. Her parents were having tea in the kitchen. She strained to hear the conversation. Her father stated emphatically that excommunication would be far worse than jail. Rotting in purgatory would be worse than any hell could be.

Aunt Fanny never came to see the family again, and Suzanne never again heard from her aunt. One night, she had overheard her father talking to her mother, *'That sister of yours will never set foot in this house again.'* As time passed, it was as if it had all been a dream. She sometimes thought, maybe, it did not happen, maybe it really was a dream. She wondered if that was why she never told Pierre, because it could be just a dream, and not part of her past.

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Suzanne, on that Sunday morning so long ago, quickened her pace. Mass would soon begin and she needed to first confess her sins. If only she could have gone the evening before. Pierre had come home late with beer on his breath. She could have left Mary, her eldest daughter, in charge, but little Arnold was so sick, she believed she could not leave him without an adult being present. If only Pierre had come straight home after work.

The early morning air was cool as she mounted the snow-covered steps. How she dreaded what would happen. She wondered what would be her penance and rationalised she could not have done any differently. Pierre would always force himself onto her, and the doctor had told her she could not have another child; she would die if she became pregnant. She wondered, if she did indeed die, who

would look after the children. She knew she had committed a sin, a mortal sin. She mumbled under her breath, *'Oh, sweet Jesus, please forgive, please forgive.'*

Suzanne waited in the vestibule until she could wait no longer. She made certain she would be the last one in the confessional, and the cubicle on the other side of the priest would be vacant. This way, nobody else would be able to overhear what she was saying. She entered, seated herself, and waited for the curtain to move.

The new priest, Father Daniel Meadows, pulled the curtain back and peered through the screen. He could see a young woman in her late twenties, possibly thirty. He could plainly see how worn out she was. He ascertained correctly, this was due to mental, rather than physical strain. He thought back to Charles Chiniquy and his writings. He muttered under his breath as he quoted, *'Poor, poor, child. Why do we make them suffer so?'*

The new priest began, "Yes, my child. How may I help you?"

When she heard the strange voice, she was shocked, even though she knew a new priest could be sitting next to her. She began, "Forgive me Father, for I have sinned."

"How long has it been since your last confession?"

"It has been several months, Father."

"And what have you to tell me?"

"I went to the hospital."

"Did something happen at the hospital?"

She hesitated. She knew she was facing excommunication. She wondered what people would say when she stopped attending mass. She had not even told her husband what she was about to do, and now she had done it. Doctor McCarthy understood it would be a grave sin. He assured her that, if asked, he would say that little Arnold had been such a difficult delivery, she needed an operation to repair the damage inside of her.

"Father, I committed a sin at the hospital."

"My child, what is the nature of your sin?"

"I had an operation."

"It is not a sin to have an operation."

"This operation is to prevent me from having children."

"Do you have children?"

"Yes."

"How many children do you now have?"

"Five." She quickly corrected herself, "I mean to say five at home."

"Five at home? Are there other children?"

"I had another, before marriage."

"And you now have five children at home?"

"Yes Father."

"What are the ages?"

"The oldest is thirteen and the youngest is an infant."

"You have five children. These days, the way the economy is, five children is a handful. You need not have anymore. By having this operation, you have not committed sin."

"But Father O'Connell said it would be a sin, even though the doctor said I could die if I tried to have another child."

"The doctor stated it would be risky to have more children?"

"Yes."

"Father O'Connell must have misunderstood. You must follow your doctor's advice, and if you now have five children, you have a full plate. And to over indulge, is not right, whether it is over indulging in food, in partying, or in the number of offspring you have. Moderation in all things is the key to happiness. You have not sinned. Now, go home and enjoy your family."

"If I do that Father, I will be committing another mortal sin."

"What sin would that be?"

"I will be sleeping with my husband without the intention of having a child. That is a mortal sin."

"Sex is something to be enjoyed between two people who love and cherish each other. You must enjoy sex without the fear of pregnancy. You will not be

committing a sin."

"Father, I'm confused."

"Do not be confused. Life is to enjoy. Go home and enjoy your family, enjoy your husband and enjoy your children, and be thankful for all you have. Most of all, keep a smile on your face in front of your loved ones. You must give the gift of happiness and good cheer to everyone, especially to your loved ones. Show your family that you are happy and that you love them, and do not worry about committing any sins. You do not have sin in your heart, and that is all that matters."

She looked down at her well-worn rosary that she daily turned around and around her tired fingers, "Father, how many times shall I repeat my rosary?"

"Rosary? Do not say your rosary. There is no need to. There is no need to take time away from your family. Now go home, go home to your family. They need you."

"Father?"

"Yes, my child."

"May I take Communion?"

"Yes, of course my child, you may take communion. Through Jesus Christ, I absolve you of all sin. Ut tu reperio in pace."

"Thank-you Father."

After her mother had told her this story, Margaret blurted out, "You still believed.

You took communion. When did you stop believing?"

"After this surprising scene in the confessional, I sought out this new priest, Father Daniel Meadows. I wanted to know if he was genuine. I visited him in his rectory. I was apprehensive of course. It was the first time I entered a rectory since I last visited Father O'Hare many years earlier, and I could not help remembering what happened between Father O'Hare and me."

"With Father Meadows though, there was no physical contact. He wasn't there for that. I believed he genuinely wanted to help people, not take advantage of them, and, not to control them. He told me, if Rome knew what he was doing, he would be removed from his position, and from The Church. He, by being truthful, was breaking all the rules. His most shocking revelation was to admit he was an atheist. He confessed it was all a sham in order for The Church to gain money and power."

"He was an atheist? A priest was an atheist?"

"Oh yes, and much more than this, he confessed most priests are atheists. He told me that he was quite certain, more than ninety-percent of priests are sexual perverts, with most being paedophiles. These perverts have no fear of Hell. All they are interested in is power, and more power, power over the people. That was in his own words. I learned a lot from him."

"And yet you still sent me to church?"

"Yes, I was afraid."

"Afraid? Afraid of what?"

"I guess I was so brainwashed, I kept on thinking someone was going to punish me ... somehow. I could not help feeling I would be punished. And, I feared being ostracised by the community. I couldn't take the humiliation if people started to talk about me. And I guess I just couldn't get the fear of Hell out of my brain."

"Father Meadows ended up telling me about his life and why he became an atheist. There really isn't that much to tell. He told me about his working in the Vatican library. There are old books which explain that there never was a real Jesus. It was all made up by some Roman Emperors in order to validate their having authority to rule over the people, the masses. How can anyone argue against God when they are told God made these men emperors? Giving up God was much like my giving up Santa Claus. I felt a great loss, but, I also felt a sense of relief, a sense of freedom. What a sham."

Margaret remembered how her mother had turned to her, stating, "I don't want you to make any more mistakes. I want you to be happy. You must seek out Francis. You must ask his forgiveness, not only for your sake, but also for the sake of the girls. They miss Francis and his mother. And, and one more thing. There shall be no more religion, no more Church, for any of us. And, especially for our little ones. Do you agree?"

Margaret nodded her head up and down as the tears kept on flowing.



RECONCILIATION

Francis' mother answered when Margaret phoned, telling her that Francis was across the street with Mr. Kapusta. Margaret wasted no time. She wanted to get this over with. She left the house and quickly walked the short distance to Mr. Kapusta's, where she found the two men getting the yard ready for winter.

She called out, "Francis, may I speak with you?"

"Of course, what do you want to talk about?"

"In private, may I see you in private?"

Mr. Kapusta spoke up, "I'll go in house so you two can talk."

"Well Margaret, what's on your mind?"

"You know perfectly well, I behaved like an ass and I want to apologize."

"Apology accepted. Now, does this mean Mother and I get to see the girls again?"

"Yes, Francis. I overreacted. I'm sorry."

"What happened to change your mind? I'm still an atheist."

"As a Catholic, because I believed what was taught in catechism, I accepted that all atheists are evil. Now, it has come to my attention, Susan Lee, as well as all her family, are atheists. I never knew Buddhists have no god. I never knew that. Well, it was more than that, I feared disapproval, disapproval from friends and family. It was stupid, so very stupid of me. I apologise, Francis, I apologise. Can you forgive

me?"

"Of course I accept your apology and forgive you. How could I not? I'm just so happy you came to your senses. And, I could have told you that Buddhists have no god."

"You could have?"

"Yes, of course, I've read about all kinds of religions and Mr. Kapusta knows more about all the various religions than anyone I know. We have discussed religion a lot, in great detail. He's a very well educated man, speaks several languages."

"Mr. Kapusta? I have a confession. My friend Donna and I paid a visit with your Mr. Kapusta. I am well aware of who he is. He told us about himself. And, my mother has also visited with him. They have a mutual friend."

"You are talking about Daniel?"

"Yes."

Francis called out, "Mr. Kapusta, could you come out now?"

Coming out the back door, Mr. Kapusta answered, "Yes siree, you love-bird make up now?"

Francis turned beet-red but he said nothing. Margaret explained, "We are friends. No more than that."

Mr. Kapusta winked as he came towards them.

Margaret spoke up, "You were telling me the truth, Mr. Kapusta, my mother is an

atheist. She's admitted it to me. I don't know everything that happened for her to give up religion. I do know, she has kept this a secret for years. Yet, she still sent me to church, and she had me confirmed. I don't understand it."

Mr. Kapusta explained, "It's very hard to discard well implanted indoctrinations, and old habits are hard to die. It's all habit, but when you have studied the innards of The Church, as I have, one can well understand how this brainwashing works. Francis never told you, I studied to be a priest and I used to work in the Vatican. I can tell you stories. In the Vatican archives I had access to all kinds of interesting things. Of course, since I am able to read Ancient Greek, Hebrew and Latin, I could easily find information I needed for my studies."

"What kind of studies?"

"The workings of the Vatican. I did it mostly for my own curiosity. I enjoy finding deep dark secrets. And, the Vatican holds many, many, secrets."

Something came into Margaret's head. She needed to ask, "Mr. Kapusta, have you always been an atheist?"

"No, not always, I was brought up in The Church. But, even as a boy I had my doubts. And, when I began working in the Vatican archives, I came to accept the fact that there are no gods. When, through study, one finds the truth about religion, and why we have it, and then, when one studies how nature works, and how evolution works, one has no choice but to have no belief in God, or any gods. It's quite simple."

Margaret questioned, "You don't tell people you're an atheist?"

"No, of course not. It's none of their business, and if I did, immediately they would hate me. They've been well taught to do so; just like your reaction when you found out Francis was an atheist. You no longer believe in God but you were afraid to not believe. Is that not so?"

Margaret, for some reason, inquired, "Francis tells me you know about various religions. I'm interested in knowing more about Buddhists? Do you know if they are atheists?"

"The Buddha, literally translated, is the enlightened one. Supposedly, a man, Siddhārtha Gautama, was the original enlightened one. If what I have read is correct, a true Buddhist would not believe in God as we know God. Therefore, I suppose, one could refer to Buddhists as atheists. I don't know how comfortable Buddhists in general are with this term. They may not want to refer to themselves as atheists, because, in our society, atheist and evil are usually, but unfairly, associated."

Francis spoke up, "Mr. Kapusta, would you mind if Margaret joined us one evening when Daniel Meadows is visiting. I think she may find the conversation interesting?"

"You're right Francis. Would you like that Margaret? Daniel is a very interesting man, I worked with him at the Vatican."

"Is he a priest?"

"When we worked together in the Vatican, we had both gone through our training to be priests, but, at that time, neither of us had been ordained. Daniel, after

leaving his position at the Vatican, was ordained and he did work as a priest for a short period of time. He has since been excommunicated."

Margaret fully remembered that her mother had mentioned Daniel Meadows as the new priest in her parish. The one who told her she had not committed a sin by having an operation. But Margaret did not reveal this to Francis and Mr. Kapusta. She wanted to meet this former priest first.

Mr. Kapusta suggested, "I'll tell you what, I'll leave it up to Francis to plan a meeting with Daniel. It will be just the three of us."

When Margaret returned home she told her mother about reconciling with Francis and she then asked, "What was the name of the new priest who told you that you were not committing sin?"

"Daniel Meadows, why do you ask?"

"Somebody told me he's coming to Winnipeg. I think it must be the same man."

Mrs. Simpson looked perplexed, "Coming to Winnipeg? Who told you that?"

"Mr. Kapusta has a friend, Daniel Meadows. Could he be the same man?"

"I don't know. But I do know I would love to see him again. I haven't heard from him since he was transferred to someplace out east."

"Maybe you should tell me the rest of the story. Who exactly is this man and what happened to make you an atheist?"

"Daniel Meadows told me how The Church is just a scam, controlling the ignorant

and extorting money from them. He started out as a priest and ended up being a devout atheist. Eventually The Church sent him east, kicked him out, and excommunicated him. He was a rebel. And, I have sometimes wondered what became of him."

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Margaret looked for any excuse to visit with Francis. She would continuously question him, "Was giving up God just like letting go of Santa Claus?"

"Pretty much." Explained Francis, "Let me paraphrase Robert Green Ingersoll, who stated that, *when he became convinced that the Universe is natural; that all ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into his brain, into his soul, into every drop of his blood, the same sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. For the first time he was free and he stood erect and fearlessly, joyously, facing the world.* That is exactly how I felt when, at an early age, I let go of all religion. It was like a great weight had been taken from my shoulders and I could walk unimpeded. I could then make my own decisions and accept consequences from decisions I had made. I learned from my choices, and I never explained, or made excuses. I became my own boss, leading my own life; not worrying about what others thought."

"Who's Ingersoll?"

"He was a friend of Andrew Carnegie who, at the time, was the richest man in the world, and also, Carnegie was a philanthropist who built libraries throughout the world, which he filled with all sorts of books. On each library he had the words, '*FREE FOR ALL*', inscribed above the front doors. Robert Green Ingersoll was a

scholar who wrote books about how Christianity's teachings were based on ancient myths. He and Carnegie both believed that the key to success, happiness and contentment was education. This is why Carnegie built libraries, and this is why Carnegie placed Ingersoll's books in every library. These two men wanted to spread 'Truth' and not fairy-tales."

"What's that got to do with your being an atheist?"

"Plenty, you see, Robert Ingersoll, along with Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain, Thomas Edison and thousands of others, some famous and some not, were all atheists who wanted to free the people from their religious bonds, through education. They wanted to lead them from darkness to the light by making knowledge available to everyone. However, it seems, religion has maintained the upper hand. Through passive censorship, the works of these men are now often hidden and unknown."

"Thomas Edison was an atheist?"

"Oh yes indeed. And I could name you hundreds of other famous men who were. Robert Green Ingersoll referred to himself as a devout atheist, but the world called him an agnostic, explaining, nobody could be certain there is no God. So, in their explanation, Ingersoll could be, at best, an agnostic. Ingersoll, as well as other atheists, such as Francis Bacon, H. G. Wells, Thomas Paine, Abraham Lincoln, William Shakespeare and Bertrand Russell, have seldom been referred to as atheists by the media. For The Churches, this would be bad for business. They allow everyone to assume these men had some sort of religion."

"So, you're telling me, it is all just a scam, this religion?"

"Oh yes indeed, I certainly am saying that."

Francis pulled a book from the shelf, "Let me read a little from the writings of Robert Green Ingersoll, who was the son of a Presbyterian minister. He knew The Bible better than most men, having read it in English, as well as in the original Greek. He points out, in his books, how The Bible has changed over the years. Some passages have been omitted and much has been added in order to aid The Churches in their exploitation of the masses. Here is an example of interpolation, the addition of words to cheat the people, *'So that now it is among the easiest things in the world to pick out at least one hundred interpolations in the Testament.'* Further down, he wrote, *'Now comes in an interpolation. In the old times when The Church got a little scarce for money, they always put in a passage praising poverty. So they had this young man ask: **'What lack I yet?'** And Jesus said unto him: **'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven.'*** The Church has always been willing to swap off treasures in heaven for cash down. And when the next verse was written The Church must have been nearly dead-broke. ***'And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'*** Did you ever know a wealthy disciple to unload on account of that verse?"

"None of those verses were in the original gospels. They were all added later by The Church. It doesn't stop there. I can give you much more. Here is another example, *'And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.'* Ingersoll emphasises that this was

not in the original Greek text. Also, nowhere in The Bible is there any mention of going to church; in fact, Jesus is quoted as telling everyone to not pray in a house of worship, but to closet yourself and speak to God in private. There is no mention of paying a tithe, of receiving sacrament, or confessing one's sins. What about buying your relatives and friends out of purgatory. That is not in the scriptures. The Churches are profiting from peoples gullibility. Why doesn't the average parishioner read The Bible as it was originally written? Why? It is because of fear. The people have been brainwashed to have a subconscious fear of spending eternity in Hell. Even better, why don't people read all that is written which proves there is no God and there never was a living, breathing Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ and all writings about him have been made up, made up in order to control the masses. Joseph Stalin understood this. That is why he used religion to prevent revolution. He was well aware that it is a very effective tool to do this."

"Are you telling me there is proof Jesus never lived?"

"Oh yes, Gerald Massey, the famous Egyptologist has translated ancient hieroglyphics showing how The Bible is a plagiarism of older fairy-tales and myths. None of it is real. None of it ever happened. In fact, the oldest evidence of religion shows man started out as an atheist. All gods are inventions of man's imagination. Many authors, including Alvin Boyd Kuhn and Charles Darwin were inspired by Massey. What did George Orwell say? He stated that he would like to start a religion, because that is where the money is."

Francis paused while Margaret stared into space, saying nothing. Eventually Francis continued, "Through Mr. Kapusta I met a man, Charles Templeton. Do you know who he is?"

"I think I may have seen him on Front Page Challenge, I'm not certain."

"You may have, he's been on television, but not often. For the most part, since he came out of the closet, he has faced some discrimination. But, he's still around. Because he is quite famous, he cannot be ignored entirely. However, he never gets the publicity he deserves. He is censored, but in a passive way. Journalists, for the most part, just ignore him."

"Who exactly is he?"

"You've heard of Billy Graham, have you not?"

"Yes, he has a column in the paper and he has been here, in Winnipeg, for his evangelical miracle-events. Some of my friends went to see him last time he was here. I think it was at the auditorium."

"That's right. Well Charles Templeton was much more famous than Billy Graham. He, in fact, trained Billy Graham on how to effectively manipulate a crowd. However, Mr. Templeton's conscience started to bother him. He explained it all to Mr. Kapusta, and to myself. He knew, with religion, he had been scamming people, and he also realised, that while he was speaking at these evangelical gatherings, the stories he was putting across to be the truth, were all tall-tales and fantasies. Mr. Templeton admitted he believed none of it. The Bible, he acknowledged, is a collection of fairy-tales. He came out of the closet as an atheist. And, since then, he has been ostracised, and his writings have been passively censored. He is currently working on a book. Mr. Kapusta advised him that he must be extremely diplomatic, he must say nothing directly derogatory about any of the churches. If he did so, no publisher would deal with him, and he could be in danger."

Margaret laughed, "It sounds very much like the Mafia."

Francis smiled, "I suppose it does. Atheists have to be so very, very, careful in our world. There is so much fanatical bigotry."

"Are you telling me, if he did write a book, and he wrote truthfully, it would never be published?"

"Well, if you look at any published books which lean towards atheism, they have all been privately published and most have been heavily censored. Major publishing houses don't touch them. Mr. Kapusta believes, the only way a major publisher would consider a book promoting atheism would be published is if the book is watered down enough to make it appear like it was pro-God."

"So you honestly think atheists face discrimination in Canada."

"Yes, definitely. Publishers and politicians know where their bread is buttered. Officially Canada does not censor, but, we all know censorship does exist. It is well hidden though. The attitude is, and always has been, deny, deny, deny, that we have any censorship, and officially, *'We have no censorship'*, but, we are fully aware of the attitude, *'If it is said loud enough and often enough, it becomes the truth'*. They won't say that out loud, but we know they are thinking it. And they continue saying very often and very loud, *'We have no censorship in Canada'*, and people, as they always do, accept what they are being told. Nobody steps up and asks for evidence, nor do they yell out that the emperor has no clothes."

Margaret asked, "When is Mr. Templeton planning to publish his book?"

"We don't know. He hasn't written it yet. But, he does have a bit of an outline. He

asked Mr. Kapusta to look it over for him and also advise him on where he could find evidence of The Bible being mythology."

"Well, I'd be interested in reading this book when it's published. You know Francis, it is all becoming clear to me. Mr. Kapusta and I have had a few talks. I can now understand how utterly stupid I've been. I'm beginning to understand, and I'm beginning to see how it is a game of power. Even if we say it's about money. Money, if we are honest, is pursued, not to ease the lives of people, but to gain power. Money gives a person a lot of power, and all the games are geared for the acquisition of power. We are told we must refer to a priest as '*Father*'. This keeps us, the congregation, as children, obedient and compliant. We answer the priest through our Child, and we are easily controlled by emotions. In fact, priests commonly refer to us as '*My Child*', even though we may be adolescents or adults. The priest gives orders to us through his Parent and our Child accepts them. Our Child, we know, is not rational, only our Adult is. Therefore, in order to stop the game, we must speak to a priest from our Adult, and we must make it plain to the priest, we expect him to answer us through our Adult. If he doesn't, we must insist he does so by telling him not to be condescending to us. If necessary, we address him from our Parent and speak to his Child. It may come to a game of wits, but we must refuse to go back to being the obsequious Child, afraid of the priest, afraid of Hell, and afraid of The Church. If everyone just simply walked away, The Church would lose its power over us. It is fear which keeps people going to mass."

Francis commented to Margaret's diatribe, "Yes. I remember how difficult it was for me, as a boy of sixteen or seventeen, to address Mr. Sutton or Mr. Kapusta as equals, Adult speaking to Adult. Both men, though, insisted I do so, in order for me

to learn how to not feel subservient. This goes against our upbringing. As children, we were told to respect our elders. I have found out, I can respect my elders and still remain equal to them, and on the same level as them. Imperialists, whether they be government or church, all have the same rules when conquering a people, first thing to do is to show them that you are the boss, you have the control. You make it plain to them by having a title of authority, such as Father, General, Viceroy, Pope, et cetera. Secondly, you have an area, an inner sanctum, where the conquered people are not allowed to enter. You make it quite plain, they are inferior to you, and that is why they are not allowed to step into certain areas, into, for example, the Cardinal's palace. They always refer to their houses and mansions as palaces. It gives an indication that they, living in a palace, are above common people."

After a short silence, Francis continued, "This is why people are usually not influenced by rational talk, but they are commonly manipulated through emotion. Society is geared to keep all of us in our Child mode. The Adult is rational and the Child is emotional. If we remain in the Child mode, we will always be controlled through our emotions."

Margaret agreed, "My father and my priest would have never accepted me speaking to them as an adult. My father would have turned vicious with me."

"That's the key. When these so called adults come on to us in a vicious manner, threatening to lose their temper, it is only part of a game, a game of instilling fear in us. They control with fear. They are feigning their ill temper in order to control us, to make us afraid of them; and fear is an emotion which enslaves us. Always, they are trying to get to our emotions."

Francis continued, "The one horrible thing about this fear game is, fear is passed along. If a father, for example, is punished or belittled by their boss or by any person in authority, such as a priest, inwardly, they will become angry; and, instinctively, they will want to eliminate their source of fear. It is animal instinct to obliterate any source of fear. However, they, being so afraid of the consequences, will not fight what is causing their fear, they will seek out a proxy. They will go home and take it out on their spouse, or on their children; or maybe they will kick the dog. Many of them, while driving home, will have road rage and try to aggravate some stranger. This only exacerbates the problem. And, it is all because, their source of fear is not being properly dealt with."

"Francis, I have never seen you so emotional. You're angry."

"I suppose I am. I get this way when I think of the priests taking advantage of little children in the confessional in order to take full control over them. These priests are like farmers breaking young horses. Have you heard the old saying, *once a horse is broke, it can never be unbroken*? I don't know if that's true. These priests abuse children in the confessional and then abuse them in the rectory. In essence, they break these children as a horse is broken. They show the child that they are powerless against Church authority, and they convince children, if they disobey, they will suffer. The child grows up under fear, and lives their whole life in fear. Can they be unbroken? I don't know, maybe they can; they are not horses."

"Francis, I'm broken. Can I be fixed?"

Francis looked at Margaret for what seemed a long time before answering, "Yes, Margaret, I honestly believe you may be fixed. I have read enough psychiatry to

believe it will happen. I know it will happen. I suggest you tell your story to Mr. Kapusta."

Margaret looked into Francis' eyes. "Francis, I want to see more of Mr. Kapusta. I can tell he's your friend. He's a true friend and I want to also be his friend. Is that possible?"

"I don't see why not. He has so much to offer. I don't see why we all should not be friends."

§

DANIEL MEADOWS

Daniel Meadows looked back over his life as he rode the train to Winnipeg, where he would be staying with his old friend, Dmytro Kapusta. It was a long time ago when he first came to Manitoba with a mission to inform parishioners the truth, the police court truth, about The Church, and about anything else which came to his mind. No more secrets and lies. It took very little time before The Church hierarchy got wind of what he was doing and booted him out. Hopefully he had opened a few eyes and saved a few parishioners from further suffering.

He was fortunate, when he left The Church he found an office job with the federal government counselling unemployed citizens. His studies in psychology and his experience dealing with people, as well as his genuine passion to make a difference, along with his compassion and empathy were great assets in his new job, and he enjoyed his work. He came to believe he did make a difference and he did help a few of the people.

He reminisced about his former life in the Vatican. One evening in particular came to his mind. He was watching the crowd anxiously waiting for white smoke indicating a new pope had been chosen. From his third floor sleeping quarters he was watching the throng swarming on the square. The scene brought to his mind images of a honeycomb frame covered with crawling bees. A continual buzz rose from the swarming insects, numbering in the thousands. The crowd swayed, seemingly in unison, with individuals glancing in all directions but repeatedly looking back to the building on Daniel's left. Suddenly, white smoke could be seen rising above the building's roof, causing the near silent hum to grow to a murmur,

and as the rest of the crowd began to understand what was happening, the noise intensified quickly to an ocean roar. Daniel Meadows muttered to himself, *'So. A new pontificate has been elected. Well, bully for him.'* And as he looked down at the crowd who were now pushing against the barrier meant to contain them, he continued his muttering, *'So, you have a new pontiff. Well, bully for you'.*

Daniel picked up a pair of binoculars, aiming them across the square to a set of doors on a vacant balcony. The wait wasn't long. The doors opened and onto the balcony stepped the new sovereign wearing a snow white cassock with a matching skullcap. Following him was a group of men all wearing scarlet cassocks, along with matching scarlet skull caps. The scene reminded Daniel of a formerly pure and innocent bride, followed by the evidence of her lost virginity being displayed on a bed sheet, which the groom was proudly hanging over the balcony railing.

Incredibly, the roar of the crowd turned to an ear shattering din as the horde pushed forward, the people in the front line reaching out as if they could stretch their arms the fifty or sixty feet to the balcony. Many had tears streaming down their faces. Some in the rear fell to their knees, crossing themselves, or massaging their rosaries with stiff fingers as they uttered words that could not be heard above the cacophony. Daniel now saw them as cockroaches, clambering for a piece of cheese. He muttered, *'How stupid, how utterly stupid. Do any of you actually think? Will one of you jump up and declare, the emperor has no clothes?'*

Looking back to the new Caesar who was silently gesticulating a blessing over the crowd, Daniel mumbled to himself, *'Do you think you have power? What a joke. One false move and those men who voted you in, would snuff you out, without even a thought.'* And he looked at the men in scarlet, who were milling about, grinning

like village idiots in an effort to vainly proclaim innocence. *'Yes you would too, you would snuff him out, wouldn't you? And do you think you have power? Just the slightest suspicion, or one false move, and you could be snuffed out as easily as your leader.'*

Daniel turned his attention back to the crowd, *'It is you who have power. But, you don't know it. All you need to do is to walk away. Just walk away as a group. What would they do, bring back the Inquisition, and put terror in your hearts, as they have past done? Just walk away I tell you. You would see those men standing on the balcony, with their mouths wide open, staring in shock and awe. Yes, just walk away. You call yourself fans of your new pontificate even before you knew who would be elected. Did you ever stop to think, fan is an abbreviation for fanatic? You are all ignorant fanatics, and because you're ignorant, you act in a stupid manner. In fact, you are stupid, all of you.'*

Silently, Daniel Meadows turned from the window. If he had played his cards right, he could be there, on the balcony. But, he chose not to. He looked down at his copy of *The Prince* lying on his cot. *'That is the true condensed bible. It is the pontiff's Mein Kampf. That is the way things work.'*

Daniel Meadows had come to a realisation. He had read philosophy for years without understanding what he was reading. Now he was beginning to comprehend it. He was beginning to understand why the crowd he had been watching were acting the way they were. They were passionate, but they lacked wisdom. Spinoza came to his mind and he finally realised what passion is. Passion is energy, energy from the soul, and we choose how we use that energy. We cannot hold this energy back, it must be released. We must think and we must plan

how we are to use this energy. If we don't, someone, through our emotions, may take control of this energy. Passion without knowledge and wisdom is usually destructive. The crowd was passionate, but they could easily be led because they did not have the knowledge to handle their passion in a constructive way. The new pope is able to direct them in any direction he wanted to because they have accepted to be his slave. He could send them off to war, or have them martyr themselves. They had given up control of themselves and allowed someone else to control their passion. Passion without knowledge is easily seized by someone seen as powerful. Passion with knowledge can be constructive if one steers it in the right direction. A passionate artist can create things of beauty, whether it be paintings, music, sculptures or edifices. To do so, the artists must guide their energy in a positive manner. This takes knowledge of the world, knowledge of outside influences, and knowledge of themselves. They need knowledge to know what direction they wish to move this passionate energy. There is no greater force than passion, and, if a leader is able to control people's passions, they can accomplish anything. Just look at passionate armies which conquer against all odds. But, what if this passionate army moved towards construction rather than destruction? Just think what they could do. They could move mountains. We owe it to ourselves to gain the wisdom to control our own passions. Daniel realised, this is what is lacking in the members of that crowd. They were being easily led because they have no knowledge of themselves. Daniel came to realise, education of the masses is the key to positive construction, the key to end all strife and all war, the key to happiness. But, how does one go about doing that? These people are too ignorant to want to be educated. They will avoid using their energy to gain knowledge. Maybe, he thought, he could open the eyes of just a few people.

Maybe he could make a difference. But how could he do it?

Daniel knew he could no longer work in the Vatican. He moved from the window and slumped onto his cot. He was very depressed. How, could he make a difference? He felt like bursting into tears, but his eyes were dry. He felt only despair. He was forty-six years of age. He was working towards a doctorate in theology and he could read dead languages. What did that qualify him to do? Teach maybe? Teach what? Teach more of this crap which he had been absorbing his entire life. He could just continue his life as before. If it's power he needed, or sexual gratification, or both, he could find all that in any parish. But he hungered for more. What was it, what did he need to fill this void, to fill this perpetual ache in his belly? He believed he had no choice but to stay in The Church. He had been offered a position of his choice, either in Québec or Manitoba, or possibly Saskatchewan, as an assistant parish priest. These were small and very pious parishes where he could rest and rejuvenate. Again, he muttered to himself, *'Manitoba, wasn't that a scene in one of W. Somerset Maugham's plays? Some place in the middle of nowhere. I think so. I'll look it up when I pass through England.'* And Québec, he had been to Montréal once, but he imagined rural Québec would be nothing like Montréal, which was a busy metropolis. This is the dilemma he faced, his acting as a very English Englishman, but being a former Hungarian citizen, who felt more comfortable speaking Hungarian, French or German rather than English, and who had changed his name to Daniel Meadows, and now admitted he had no faith.

He decided he would go to Canada. And, while he was passing through England, with the intention of taking a ship to Canada, Daniel visited his friend Michael

Andover. They had been together in boarding school and later in the seminary. He spent a few weeks on a cot in Michael's front room, despite Michael's invitation to bed with him. Daniel explained, "Michael, that part of my life is over."

Michael quickly responded, "Is it your intention to be the only celibate in The Church?"

"Michael, you have no understanding. I've lost my faith. I am not being celibate in order to martyr myself. I just don't have the desire. In fact, I have no desires at all. Don't you understand?"

"You're depressed. It's obvious. You need respite, a retreat. Maybe you need a good night on the town with booze and lustful women or, if you like, young boys."

"No, it's not that. I just don't know what to do with myself. I'm well-read and I have a degree in theology, but what am I good for? What am I to do with myself?"

"You're not about to do something stupid are you?"

"What do you mean stupid?"

"Like blow your brains out, or some foolish thing like that."

"No, I admit I'm depressed, but I am not suicidal. It's just that I don't know what to do. I have no saleable talents. Other than going to some other denomination, which I cannot do, what am I good for?"

"Why not another denomination? Why not Anglican? Many of our former seminarians have, and they seem to be doing alright. Take Frank Wood for example. He's an Anglican priest and very happy to be one. Look at that Canadian,

the one who wrote that book, *I was a Priest*. Isn't he now a Presbyterian minister?"

"Michael, that's a joke. He went from the frying pan in to the fire. He knows religion is all bullshit but he doesn't have the courage to venture out on his own. Does he honestly think Presbyterianism is any better? Okay, I admit, taking away the confessional is one step in freeing the people, but Protestantism still keeps them in chains, in slavery. The only way they would be free would be to give up all superstition, all religion. However, he, like me, is qualified to do nothing but lead a flock of sheep. So he abandons one flock to take over another. Don't you see, that's my problem? I want to make a living but I don't have the education or skills to do anything else. Michael, you just don't get it, do you? I won't make the mistake of jumping from the frying pan into the fire. How can I keep on preaching what I know to be false? How can I say there's a god and Jesus Christ was a living and breathing man, when we both know none of it is true?"

"You are going to get nowhere by trying to fight the system. You know that, don't you? If it all bothers you, why not try living a layman's life, if that is what you need. You could get a job as a labourer on construction. They are always looking for gophers, and the manual labour would take your mind off your problems."

Daniel looked down at his lily white and well-manicured hands, "I'm five-ten and I weigh ten stone at the most. I have never done manual labour in my life. Don't you think you're being rather stupid?"

"I see what you mean. Maybe you could be a private secretary. I know a prosperous writer who's looking for one right now. You'd be an excellent candidate."

"And is he looking for benefits on the side?"

"I see what you mean. Now that you've given that up, the options aren't many. Nobody wants a straight fuddy-duddy."

"I have no choice but to go to Canada, commence my position in some little out of the way place and take things as they come. How can you understand? Look at you, you have a stipend and don't need to work. But, are you really doing okay since you quit The Church?"

"I can't complain, I hang around with an artsy group who admit to being hedonists. I fit in quite well. Jimmy Savile keeps me well entertained and he has a lot of connections. One need never get bored around him. He's having a party tonight if you are interested in having some fun. Lots of young boys and girls."

"I told you Michael, I don't want any of that."

"Are you sure? You could do the same as me and learn to forget your troubles. If you need money, as I said, one could always get a job as a secretary or companion with one of my friends. However, as you say, since my mater died I've no need of money. Mother was very well off and I was her only heir. I wouldn't mind supporting you for a while. We could be more than friends."

Daniel scowled and Michael finally took the hint. He changed the direction of the conversation, "Well, if you are really set on going to Canada, possibly I'll see you there. I cross the pond on a regular basis. Many of my friends live in New York, Chicago and Montréal. I don't know anyone in Manitoba if that's where you choose to go, but, I'm up to a bit of adventure. I wouldn't mind seeing what a quaint little

French hamlet in Canada looks like." With a thoughtful look, Michael added, "Wait a minute. Sonia Karpinsky did mention that she occasionally visits some relatives in Winnipeg. Maybe, I could travel with her. She is so much fun, you know. She's a regular Marlene Dietrich, if you know what I mean, gender, to her, is meaningless."

A very serious look came over Daniel's face and Michael knew Daniel wished to be frank as he spoke, "Michael, you are the only friend I have in this world. I can't talk seriously to anyone else. Not even any of your friends, even though they are non-judgemental. Michael, do me a favour. Come and see me. I'm fearful."

Michael reached over to his friend and clasping his hand he assured Daniel, "Don't you worry, it will be alright." Tears came to Daniel's eyes and suddenly he felt ten years old; he wished that he could go back to that age, the age of innocence, before Father Saint-Maurice.

Daniel tried to explain what had come over him. He described the crowds coming to the Vatican to worship. "Michael, I can't condemn them. I did the same. The more I was abused and humiliated, the more I tried to strengthen my faith and my commitment. It just does not make sense and I wish I could make them understand."

Michael tried to rationalise, "The common man has a tendency to bite the hand that feeds him and wipe the ass that shits on him. It's human nature. The more The Church flagellates them, the more they come back for another helping. Anyone who tries to interfere will be attacked. Is it any different than trying to come between two quarrelling lovers? Together, they will turn on anyone who tries to intervene. The common man has no common sense."

Later, as they ate, Daniel could not help but thoughtfully gaze upon his friend. A slightly lighter version of Johnny Mathis, that's how many in the seminary referred to him. He did indeed resemble the singer, and like Johnny Mathis, he was very passionate about what he did. And he was also passionate about athletics, especially tennis. He was slim and small boned, but muscular, and he always looked poised as if he was ready, like a cat, to spring into action. He was handsome of course, with very fine, almost girlish facial features. He had admitted, in the past, he had been an older priest's chattel while at school, but Daniel knew Michael was now having a long term relationship with a woman slightly older than he was. Were they lovers? Daniel did not wish to ask.

For Michael, Daniel was a close friend, closer than he had been with anyone, despite the fact their relationship had never been consummated. Daniel never did see Michael in a sexual way. They were more like brothers.

Suddenly, Michael became very animated and with a smile of delight announced, "I have it. I'm off to the South of France for the winter, why don't you join me?"

"How can I join you? I'm penniless and homeless and I'm expected to take up a position in Canada."

"Take a sabbatical. Considering the mental state you're in, and the shortage of priests, you'd get whatever time off you need."

"Michael, now you're talking nonsense. How could I pay for my keep?"

"I was telling you about Willy. You remember the West End play that we attended last Friday?"

"You know what I think of your friend Willy's plays. You don't need to remind me how I was bored to tears with his inane but so-called comedy peppered with dull sarcasms which the actors tried to pass off as wit."

"That's what the public devours, and Willy's an expert at giving them what they like. Shear fairy-tale material, and the more predictable the humour, the better. The audience wouldn't appreciate anything deep and dry. You should know that. Pulpit diatribes may not be funny, but, for the most part, they are just as silly and inane. Wouldn't you agree?"

"So, what does this have to do with my predicament?"

"Willy has a tiny cottage adjacent to his Riviera manor. He has offered the cottage to me for the winter. I am inviting you to share it with me. It would cost you nothing. What do you say?"

"What's the catch? Do I have to screw a few of your friends?"

"Of course you don't. That's the point. You can be a recluse in the cottage if you want, or you can frequent the main house for parties, and a little fun if you so choose. Nobody will put any pressure on you, I promise. You'll have a rest, and in a month or two, you'll be back to your old self. Trust me."

"Michael, I have no desire to be my old self. I admit you've got me over a barrel. I do need a rest, and I need time to think. If you promise to have your friends leave me alone, I'll go. But it may not be for the winter. It will only be for as long as it takes for me to feel better."

"It's a deal then. We'll leave next week."

§

Daniel received a cold reception from Willy. Obviously, Michael had told him Daniel was off bounds. Daniel became the recipient of Willy's sardonic and caustic wit, "Daniel Meadows, do you write under that name? I don't seem to recall any of your work."

"Actually, I don't write."

"You don't write. Does anyone but a writer closet themselves for weeks on end with no social amusement?"

"I assure you; I've known many like me over the years."

Willy gave Daniel an ironic smile as he turned to address one of his toadies who were hanging about the front garden.

Later, as they were settling into the cottage, Michael assured Daniel, "Willy expects each and every one of his guests to pay for their board and keep. However, in your case, I will make double payment. I will pay your share. You have no need to worry."

It was during his little vacation, Daniel decided to accept a position in Canada. It would give him a chance to possibly save a few gullible parishioners further anguish. The bishop wrote back, stating his new posting would be in Winnipeg.

As Daniel sat on the train that would take him to his new parish, he again thought about Michael. He envied him because he had enough of an annuity to do

whatever he pleased. It was necessary for Daniel to make his own living, but Daniel was adamant he would not be a sycophant or toady as Michael suggested he should be in order to live off one of Michael's wealthy friends. He had been living off The Church for years, and now he needed to find some way to break away and make his own way. As the train was approaching Fort William, Daniel turned his eyes from the water to catch sight of a billboard depicting a bottle of ginger ale with the caption, Drink Canada Dry. Daniel turned his eyes back to the vast mass of water, which is Lake Superior. He could not hold back a chuckle as he thought about the humour depicted by the billboard. He wondered, *'Was that done on purpose?'* Was Daniel aware this slight chuckle was an indication his depression was beginning to lift.

Daniel spent a few days in Saint Boniface with the Scarlet Fathers, while the rectory beside his new church was being redecorated. In the Scarlet Fathers mansion, which was usually referred to as the Bishop's Palace, a bed and three meals a day were always available for itinerant clergy, as long as one didn't take advantage of the hospitality. Daniel believed that a three or four day stay wouldn't be excessive.

From The Palace, a fifteen minute walk brought Daniel to Winnipeg's downtown area where he did a little window-shopping. Winnipeg was an English city but coming back over the bridge to Saint Boniface, Daniel could walk along Provencher Boulevard and converse in French with the retailers. Daniel had always found English a difficult language and he felt more relaxed speaking French.

The spring weather was so nice that Daniel walked the entire length of Provencher Boulevard. On his way back he cut over to Whittier Park where, standing by the

river, he could watch smoke rising from one of the tall chimneys at the steam generating plant, and a boat being loaded with cargo at Alexander docks. He sat on the river bank and smoked a cigarette. As he contemplated the serenity, all his troubles seemed so distant. If only life could go on like this.

On his fourth day in Winnipeg, Daniel was informed his room in The Church rectory was ready for him. A lay-brother, came to the mansion to pick up Daniel. "You are Father Meadows? Everyone is busy so I have been chosen to drive you. I am called Pierre Lambert."

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Monsieur Lambert." And the two men shook hands, each smiling politely.

"We hope that you will be here longer than the last assistant. People were just starting to get used to him when, in less than two years, he was transferred to Québec. Father Beauchemin was he."

It was twelve-ten when they entered the three-storey Georgian house that served as the rectory. As Father O'Reilly introduced himself, he suggested that they go straight to the dining room as lunch was being served. Daniel could immediately see that he would not be suffering in this parish. A housekeeper served table and the meal was more than he was used to. It consisted of a roast chicken with fresh asparagus, potatoes, and fresh home-made bread. It was a big meal for just the two priests. Father O'Reilly ate with gusto but Daniel only took a small portion explaining that he was used to meager meals.

The senior priest laughed, "Your stomach will soon get used to being filled up, I'm certain."

Daniel only smiled politely while he surveyed Father O'Reilly's ruddy face and his bulging belly which pushed against the table.

When they moved to the parlour to have coffee and cigarettes, Father O'Reilly, in his best civil voice, began the interrogation, "You seem quite mature to be an assistant priest, when were you ordained?"

Daniel knew that Father O'Reilly would have received a communication from the Canadian office detailing his life history. Was he just being polite or was he trying to trip him up, or maybe embarrass him? Possibly, Daniel thought, he wishes to show that he is the one with authority and Daniel must obey? Daniel answered all questions honestly, patiently, and courteously. As he did he reflected back on his life.

He was a ten year old child in boarding school. He served as an altar boy just like many of his schoolmates. It was in the vestry one Sunday when it happened. Daniel had erased the incident and the ones that followed from his memory for many years. Michael Andover was talking about priests who liked '*bum-fucking*'. Daniel was shocked at Michael's crudeness, but it was the crudeness that invoked an image in Daniel's brain that brought the memories back to light. Several days later, Daniel confessed, it wasn't just Father Saint-Maurice, other priests, including Father Flanagan had anal sex with him at their old boarding school.

Michael had blurted out, "You're not the only one. I think he must have '*bum-fucked*' half the boys at school."

"Did he do it to you?"

Michael laughed loudly, "I've taken it from him and also, as I grew older, I have given it to more than a few younger boys. What's the matter? Don't you like a little fun?"

Even back then, Daniel realised, Michael had no faith and had taken all catechism teachings as nothing but made up lies, while Daniel insisted on believing it was true. As a young boy, Daniel was certain, if he wasn't careful he would go straight to Hell if he did not take it all seriously. This is why Daniel said nothing. It hadn't been fun for him and the thought made him sick. What was he to do about his sin, and if Michael was enjoying such things, what kind of a priest would he make? He had asked Michael, "Did you confess?"

Michael answered with a question, "Confess? Confess for what?"

"For what the priest did to you and for what you did to others."

"Daniel, you think too much. Do you think anyone is truthful and honest in the confessional? It's a game. Some tell outlandish stories to shock the priest, and others tell a few innocent white lies or misdemeanors, in order to make themselves look human and to keep the priest happy. Any real sins are left out of the conversation."

"Are you not worried about going to Hell?"

Michael laughed so hard, he fell to his knees. When he regained his composure he stated, "You've got to be kidding. Don't you know it's all malarkey? Anybody who believes in these fairy-tales has got to be either insane or stupid. What are you, are you stupid?"

As Daniel was progressing towards his doctorate in theology, he read a lot of texts in Ancient Greek which verified that the story of Jesus Christ was a fairy-tale representing allegories which only ignorant people truly believed, and nobody whom he knew, inside or outside of The Church, professed to believe. As Michael crudely worded it, "Are you going to waste your whole life to find out that there is no reward at the end, or do you enjoy this life, the one and only life you have?"

For a while, Daniel seriously considered joining the Buddhist religion. Would they accept him as a priest? Daniel knew Buddhists had no god but they did not advertise this fact. They knew, to profess they did not believe in god, would be suicide for them, despite the fact that their religious beliefs, to a great extent, mirrored the teachings in the New Testament before The Church had doctored it up to suit their needs. Rather than denying the existence of god, Buddhists just do not talk about it. The Buddha clearly stated that only fools would believe in god, and that it was man who invented god in order to instil fear. The exact quote is, *'Gripped by fear, men go to the sacred mountains, sacred groves, sacred trees and shrines'*. Buddhists believe that feeling insecure, man created the idea of gods in order to give him comfort in good times, courage in times of danger, and consolation when things went wrong. People become more religious at times of crises, you will hear them say that the belief in a god or gods gives them the strength they need to deal with life. You will hear them explain that they believe in a particular god because they prayed in time of need and their prayer was answered. The god-idea is a response to fear and frustration. The Buddha taught that man must understand his fears, to lessen his desires and to accept the things that are beyond his power to change. Man must overcome his fear, not with irrational belief but with rational understanding. Despite the fact that, deep down

inside, Daniel no longer believed in a god, he decided to remain in his parent's faith. Possibly, he thought, he could undo some of the damage The Church is doing.

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MEETINGS AND SURPRISES

Years passed, as they do, and much water had gone under the bridge. Daniel Meadows was now older, wiser, and much more content. He was now heading back to Winnipeg where it all began; where he finally broke free and told the truth, as he saw it. He had come to realise there is no such thing as truth, only one's opinions. Different historians put different slants on history. It's not only because of their biases, but it is also because of the way they see events. Their view is much different from how others see the same events. Out of thousands of images an eye may see, only a few will be remembered. What happens to the other images?

Daniel, after many years, had contacted Dmytro Kapusta, believing this would be the one person he could be honest with; the one person he could trust, and Daniel was anxious to see him. Secondly, Daniel was curious to find out what happened to some of his former parishioners, the ones he had been truthful with. Did he help them? God only knows? Daniel laughed at this 'Freudian slip'. God only knows. How many times, as a child, and as an adolescent, did he hear and also repeat that phrase? Many times. God only knows. It sounds so ridiculous now that he was an atheist. It just goes to show how things can be ingrained in a person.

Daniel had been living in Mr. Kapusta's house for only a few short days when Francis and Margaret came for a visit. Mr. Kapusta had invited them for supper. As the evening progressed, Margaret stated that she thought she remembered Daniel as a priest in their church. Daniel confessed he remembered Margaret and he also remembered her family, especially her mother. This statement gave Margaret a sudden near panic attack. She pictured her mother in the rectory and she also

remembered her experiences in the rectory.

Daniel cooled Margaret's anxiety as he spoke, "When I first came to Winnipeg I came under false pretenses. I had already turned to atheism and I decided to try to undo some of the damage The Church had done in the community. I spoke the truth, as I saw it, not only in the pulpit but also in the confessional. Margaret, your mother, Suzanne, I remember her well. This is because she was the first person I spoke truthfully to. Not wanting to shock her, I didn't come right out and tell her I was an atheist, but I did tell her how much of the teachings of The Church were false, including the confessional. Nowhere in the original Bible is the confession of sins mentioned. I know, I have read the original manuscripts written in Ancient Greek, and I can verify that there were many interpolations inserted into The Bible in order to scam the people and strengthen The Church's hold on them."

Later, as Francis walked Margaret home, they talked. Margaret looked over at Francis as she spoke, "Francis, will you ever marry?" Once she said it, she wished she could take her words back.

"Francis though, was not perplexed. He answered honestly, "I've really never thought about it. I've a full life and there's no need for me to marry. I'm used to doing just as I please."

"You've never had the desire to have children?"

"No, not really. I don't see the point."

"Francis."

"Yes Margaret."

"Do you remember watching Sputnik?"

"Oh yes, I remember vividly. It was a cold evening but it felt so cozy next to you. You squeezed my hand."

"Why didn't we ever go out?"

"I don't know."

"I guess I was a bit stuck-up. I mean, I liked you, but, you were ... well, you were different. People made fun of you."

"Yes, they did. I was different and it did bother me, not being accepted. But, truth be told, I don't mind being different. I did back then, but not today. Every dog has his day and I guess this is now my day. It's my turn."

"Do you feel superior?"

"No. I realise everyone's the same. Nobody is superior. The Church tries to tell us differently, but, in truth, we are all the same. It's just that we all have different talents. And, we all have different experiences. It all shapes us into who we are. But saying one is superior over others is not right. I don't want power over somebody else, and I don't allow anyone to feel they have power over me. I have my strengths and my beliefs and I feel everyone has to choose what areas they want to cultivate and what they believe in. However, I reject the idea of anyone forcing their beliefs onto me. Do you know what I mean; it's the old idea that we are All-One."

"I think I do, understand, that is. I like that term, All-One."

As they stopped in front of the door to the Simpson home, Margaret looked into Francis' eyes and smiled. Francis smiled back and Margaret leaned in, giving Francis a kiss, right on the lips. Francis was taken aback but he said nothing. Margaret never let him react, she quickly turned and stepped into the house, leaving Francis, who was slightly in shock, standing in the darkness.

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FRANCIS IS PERPLEXED

Saying Francis was shocked when Margaret kissed him, would be an understatement. He didn't know what to make of it. Is that what people did? Was it a kiss of friendship or did she mean something by it? Francis truthfully did not know. He remembered, she had brought up the subject of marriage. Did she have the idea they should marry? Possibly she is thinking the girls need a father. All the way home, he thought of nothing else. By the time he got into bed he had decided he would just ignore it, just let it go and never mention it.

As Francis was in the habit of seeing Mr. Kapusta on a regular basis, and since Daniel Meadows was Mr. Kapusta's live-in guest, Francis began seeing Daniel almost daily. In the evenings, the three men would often sit in the living room chatting over a snifter of brandy or whiskey. Mr. Kapusta would light his pipe and Daniel would smoke a cigarette while Francis, who never got into the habit of tobacco, sipped on his drink.

Francis found Daniel to be a very interesting man. He knew so many obscure historical facts, and Francis was amazed, Daniel had the same attitudes as Mr. Kapusta. He once stated, "Don't take anything I say seriously, question it all. Check my references and seek counter arguments. That's what research and learning are all about. I could be wrong, and I could change my mind when I get new information."

Francis didn't mean to, but, he mentioned to his two friends how Margaret had kissed him. Without thinking, and what seemed instinctive behaviour, he found himself asking these two men what their opinion on this incident was.

"Well Francis," Mr. Kapusta answered, "in my experience, one can never tell what a woman means when she does something like that. It could be simply an affectionate kiss, or, she could be testing the waters. How do you feel about it? Do you have any romantic feelings towards her?"

Francis became embarrassed. He wished he had not mentioned it, but it was too late, "I never thought about it. I mean, I don't know. I've never really thought about romance. Do you think that's her motive? She did mention my never marrying. I don't know why. I don't think it's romance. We are too old for that."

Daniel spoke up, "Francis, why don't you ask her what her motives were? In my experience, it's best to bring it all out into the open. Don't leave the elephant just mutely standing in the room. Possibly it was her pre-conscious brain in auto-pilot. You know, a spontaneous thing she never thought about. A spur-of-the-moment thing and she doesn't even know why she did it. Ask her. Talk about it. That's my advice. She may just laugh it off."

Francis thought he understood what Daniel was getting at, since, he had just done the same thing by blurting out to his two friends about the kiss. Did he do this because he just couldn't get the incident out of his mind? Possibly, that's why he told it to his two friends, because it kept going around and around in his brain even though he constantly told himself it wasn't important; it was always on his mind. Maybe Daniel was right? If he knew her motives he would probably feel better about it.

Francis began the conversation as he was walking Margaret to Mr. Kapusta's house, "Margaret!"

"Yes Francis."

"You kissed me."

Margaret said nothing. She just smiled.

"Why did you kiss me?"

"Do I need a reason?"

"Well, I don't know. Well, what I mean is, what kind of kiss was it? Was it like kissing one of your daughters?"

"Francis, I kissed you on the lips. It was more than just affection. I felt like kissing you because I feel attracted to you."

Francis could feel himself starting to turn red. He wished he had kept silent. He said no more on the subject. However, he found he could think of nothing else, only that kiss. He knew he loved Margaret, he always had, ever since Sputnik when she lay by his side in the dim light, and they had held hands while he had looked over at her. He thought of that song, and he could hear the words in his head, *'What a little moonlight could do to you!'* Was that it, was it just the moonlight?

Francis remembered, after that evening when they had held hands while watching Sputnik, Francis had often looked at Margaret at school and he had fantasised about her. But, it had always been a dream. Francis, deep down, felt he could never, ever, be part of Margaret's life. She was pretty and attractive. All the boys

on the football team were in competition for her attention. Now, he wondered, what was he to do about it?

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Eventually Francis worked up enough courage to phone and ask, "Margaret, it's Francis. I was wondering, would you care to have dinner."

"Of course Francis, your mother is an excellent cook. I always look forward to one of her meals."

"That's not what I meant. I mean, would you care to go to a restaurant, just you and me?"

Margaret went silent and Francis could feel his cheeks burn. Finally, Margaret spoke, "Yes Francis, I would love to."

"Good, shall we make it Saturday?"

"Of course. Saturday would be fine. What time shall I expect you?"

"How about if I pick you up around four? Is that too early? I thought we might have a glass of wine before we eat."

"Four is fine, I'll expect you then. Thank-you Francis."

It was only Tuesday. Francis was in a panic. He knew nothing about dating and he really didn't know where they should eat. He sought Mr. Kapusta's advice.

Mr. Kapusta was nonplussed, "It really doesn't matter where you eat, Francis. It's

just that you will be together. However, I suggest Sally and Wendy on Sargent Avenue. The restaurant is split in half. The back half is usually quite empty. The two of you could have an intimate meal. I suggest you make reservations for five o'clock. And, ask for the table for two under the bay window in the back."

"Reservations? Must I make reservations?"

"Of course Francis, even if the restaurant is empty, it shows you have some class and that you plan ahead. You never know, someone could be having a birthday party or something and you may not get the seat you want, if you don't reserve. And don't forget, tell them you want to sit in the back, at the bay window."

Francis and Margaret were silent as they drove to the restaurant. Francis ordered a bottle of red wine. After they had ordered dinner, Margaret broke the silence, "I have not led a saintly life Francis. In fact I have some regrets."

"Don't we all!"

"Francis. I'm trying to be serious. I have confessions I must make before this goes any further."

Francis looked perplexed as he leaned over the table and searched Margaret's eyes, "What kind of confessions?"

Margaret looked down, seeming to examine the tablecloth, "I've done things I'm ashamed of and I haven't always been honest."

Francis said nothing and Margaret continued, "Jake is not Olivia's father. I have never told anyone. When I first had sex with Jake, even though I never saw a

doctor, I knew I was pregnant. I tricked Jake into marrying me. I never loved him, but I knew all he wanted was to get into my pants and I let him. I was desperate. I didn't know what to do or whom to turn to. The only person I thought I could talk to had abandoned me. I thought he loved me, but he ran off in the middle of the night." Margaret began to silently cry. Tears rolled down her cheeks. Francis handed her a handkerchief. She wiped her eyes and blew her nose.

Francis reached across and took Margaret's hand, "Let's talk about this later. Let's enjoy our dinner and we can discuss this after we leave the restaurant."

Margaret whispered, "Thank-you Francis."

All through dinner Francis did the talking. He told Margaret all about Mr. Kapusta and his extensive knowledge on all topics. He also told her about what he, himself, was interested in. How he loved long walks along country paths and riverbanks searching out different plants and insects. This confirmed to Margaret, Francis was indeed different.

On the drive back home, Francis turned onto a side street and parked the car. As he turned the ignition off, he began the conversation, "Tell me who Olivia's father is."

Margaret looked shocked as she spoke, "It was an older man." She hesitated and began to cry, at first slowly and then uncontrollably.

Francis said nothing. He put his arm around Margaret and waited. Eventually Margaret calmed down and Francis spoke, "It was a priest, was it not?"

Margaret turned her head towards Francis. She had a questioning look on her face

as she looked into Francis' eyes, "Yes, it was a priest."

"Father Lucifer, was it not?"

"Yes, how did you know?"

"He had a reputation. You were not the only one."

"I know. I know that now, but I didn't at the time."

Francis explained, "He was a complete pervert. It was because of him I quit going to confession. I can thank him for that. He opened my eyes, he took away my blindness. Because of him, I saw the light."

Margaret was in shock, "Did he do it to you too?"

"Physically, no. Mentally, yes."

The two sat in silence for a long time before Francis spoke, "It wasn't your fault Margaret. You were desperate. This perverted villain, and there are thousands of them in The Church, preyed on you. It is all a game of control. People don't understand that. They have power over innocent and defenseless children. They warp them and many become slaves to their organisation. The Church speaks about weeding out these perverts but they have no intention of doing so. It's all about control through fear. People are afraid because they, The Church, is all powerful. The governments, the police, the politicians are all under their control. They indeed are all powerful. The only thing for anyone to do is just to walk away and that is exactly what I have done. That is what men like Mr. Kapusta and Mr. Meadows have done. And, that is exactly what you will do. You will walk away, with

me."

"Francis, you can't mean that, not after the kind of life I've been living; not after all the lies and deceit I have lived with. Michael, I am no good."

"Don't let Father Lucifer and the rest of these perverts control your life any longer. We will work together. We will get married and I'll adopt the girls. We will never live a lie again."

Margaret had one more confession, "Francis, every time I look at Olivia, I see Father Lucifer. I think I may take it out on her. I am afraid of myself."

"Olivia is innocent. She is as innocent as you were when this man defiled you. You will not take it out on her, and she will never know who her real father was. She will always believe Jake is her father. I hesitated to tell you. But, possibly, you have already heard."

"Heard what?"

"Jake is dead. My mother heard, there was a car crash, Jake and another man were killed outright."

Margaret looked as if she was about to faint as she blurted out, "Oh, my god, dead, I can't believe it."

"It's true. I suggest, to the girls we will never speak ill of Jake. Let them think of him as a loving father. They deserve it."

They sat in silence. Francis pulled a Kleenex from his pocket and passed it to Margaret before he continued, "Our concern is to break the mould once and for

all. Margaret, I love you. I always have, ever since the evening when we looked at Sputnik together. Do you remember that evening as we watched Sputnik?"

"Yes, I remember. Do you think we can do it? Be happy, I mean?"

Francis smiled, "Of course we can, if we just live our own lives."

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WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

Mr. Kapusta accepted the offer of 'giving the bride away'. A few days later, Suzanne Simpson came to Mr. Kapusta's house in order to plan the wedding.

Mrs. Simpson began, "You are well aware, this is not Margaret's first wedding. Her first one was in a church, but this one will not be. I don't know where they will have the ceremony. They are leaving that up to you and me. Of course, as I said, this one will not be in a church and Margaret will not be wearing white."

"I am well aware of that. It seems, we are all atheists. We could make arrangements to have the wedding outdoors. Would that be suitable?"

"Why don't we have it in the Humphrey's back yard? Mrs. Humphrey has offered to host it. There won't be very many people and, with her perennial garden in bloom, it would be nice, and inexpensive to boot. We could then have a little reception in the house. What are we looking at, maybe, twenty, or a few more people, in total?"

Mr. Kapusta did not hesitate, "Yes, I agree. However, Mr. Sutton has offered to host the wedding. He has been like a father to Francis and Francis greatly respects him. He has a little acreage just north of the city right on the Red River, and he has well-manicured grounds. I think it's a wonderful idea."

"I'm surprised that you have already spoken to Mr. Sutton. They have just gotten engaged."

"Like I said, Cy has been a surrogate father to Francis. He would be very

disappointed if he couldn't do this."

Mrs. Simpson smiled, "I'll speak to Mrs. Humphrey. I think it's my duty now that we are going to be related, I think we need to get to know each other a little better, especially since we will be sharing the same grandchildren. Francis will be legally adopting the girls."

"Yes, Margaret told me. In fact, she told me a lot of things."

"Such as?"

"Such as your talking to her about your relationship with Daniel Meadows."

"Yes, and she told me that you have the same religious convictions as Mr. Meadows."

"That is correct. And, she is greatly relieved that you are also an atheist."

Mrs. Simpson smiled, "Yes I am. Funny, how natural it now is for me to say that. I thought it never could be; comfortable with coming out of the closet, I mean."

Mr. Kapusta smiled, "We have been so indoctrinated. Most people, even if they give it all up and are convinced they have no belief in God, will still feel very uncomfortable admitting to being an atheist. The Church has done a remarkably good job of brainwashing us all."

Mrs. Simpson asked, "Is it true, Christianity was an invention of Roman Emperors? Margaret told me that."

"It's true. I have read enough evidence to believe it. And, when you understand

how it was done, and when you have read the books, it all makes perfect sense how and why they did it. It was all about power over the people."

Mrs. Simpson smiled and Mr. Kapusta continued, "Well, it looks like our generation is moving on and a new generation is coming up. That's another thing I want to talk to you about, the girls' education. You probably aren't aware that I'm a fairly wealthy man and I have no descendants. There is no reason why I cannot finance an education for Olivia and Alice. Could you help me set up some form of annuity to give them a start in life?"

"That is very generous of you. I'd be happy to help."

"Good, we are going to get to know each other. I can see that. We have common goals and interests."

"You know Mr. Kapusta, Margaret has told me how Francis has spoken about evolution. About how every generation must go up one rung on the ladder so that the family will keep on rising."

"I agree and that is why I am determined that Olivia and Alice will be educated. I mean truly educated and not just indoctrinated with fear and superstition."

After a brief pause, Mr. Kapusta added, "Suzanne, may I call you Suzanne? Now that we are getting to know each other, and I'm beginning to feel like I'm one of the family, I'd like to start using our Christian names. Would that be alright?"

"Yes, but let's not refer to them as Christian names."

They both laughed and everything seemed okay in their world. They could both

understand that hope and joy would be their future.

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